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COMMONWEAL

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August 19, 1994

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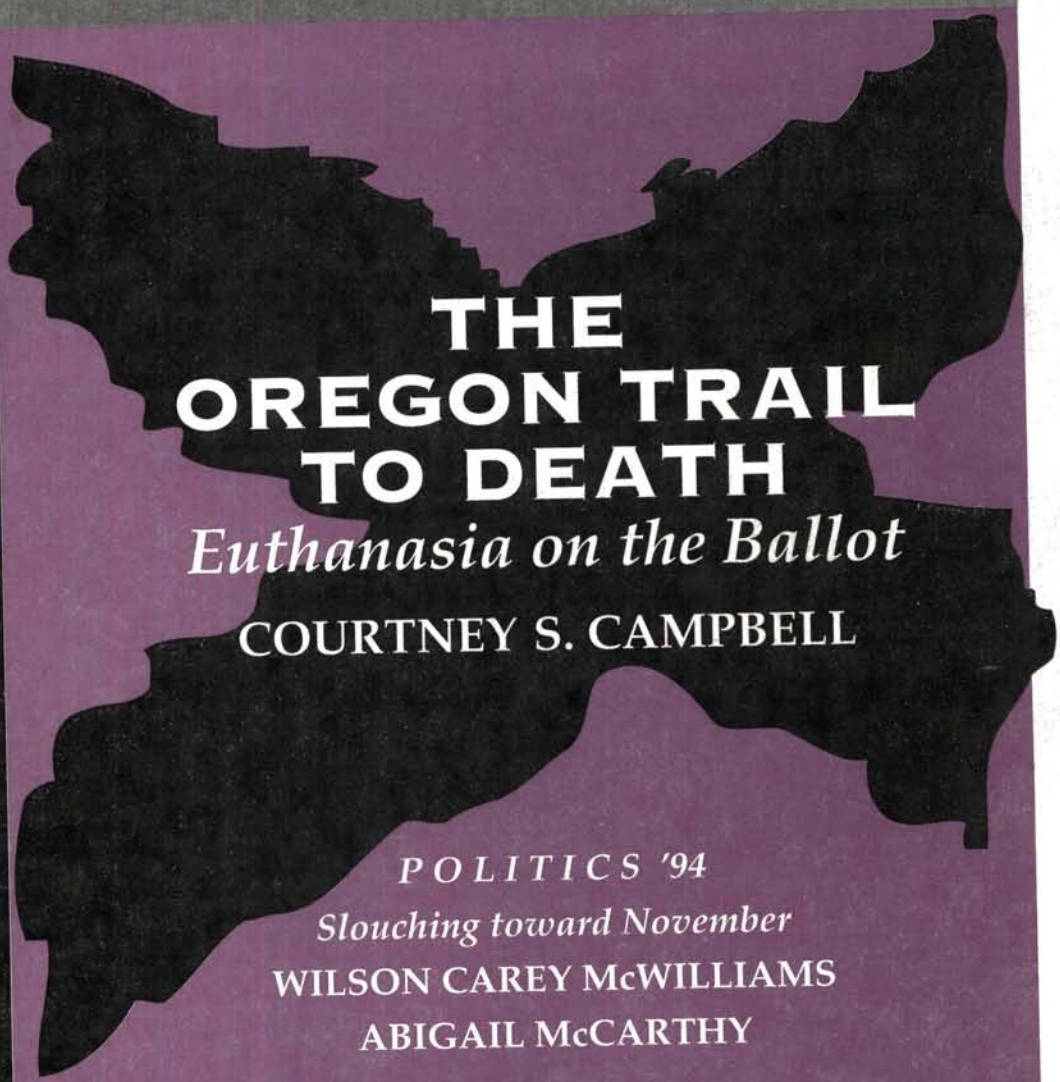

THE OREGON TRAIL TO DEATH

Euthanasia on the Ballot

COURTNEY S. CAMPBELL

POLITICS '94

Slouching toward November

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

'Through a glass, darkly'

Paul Baumann interviews

DAVID PLANTE

ELIZABETH BEVERLY

reviews Plante's 'ANNUNCIATION'

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CORRESPONDENCE

For career diplomats

Harrisonburg, Va.

To the Editors: Edward Gaffney's comments ["Late for His Appointments," June 17] go awry when he uses the appointments of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and John Kenneth Galbraith to New Delhi as examples to support his argument for more noncareer ambassadorships. Surely he realizes that these two gentlemen were the exceptions rather than the rule. The Clinton administration should be applauded for largely avoiding the practice of using ambassadorial appointments as rewards for large campaign contributions and party loyalty. The Foreign Service has suffered much from the politicization of appointments to sensitive diplomatic positions, a practice that often amazes and distresses leaders of foreign nations.

Gaffney also misinterprets the "up or out" policy of the Foreign Service, which he characterizes as a reward for incompetent bureaucrats. Although not perfect, the policy is designed to remove the pedestrian performers, just the sort of officer that Gaffney finds so objectionable. By and large, the Foreign Service consists of able and qualified individuals who are selected after a rigorous competitive process and who develop language and area expertise that few political appointees can offer to the conduct of our nation's diplomacy.

BEN F. FORDNEY

A good Methodist

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Every issue of *Commonweal* contains articles and reviews that are helpful, informative, and absorbing. In the June 3 issue, I particularly enjoyed the pieces by Joe Lersky and Rosemary Ridd. In David Carlin's column, "Announcing Early," however, I found a statement to be disturbing and lacking ecumenical sensitivity.

Referring to Bill Clinton, Carlin writes, "Anyone who can show genuine sympathy for both the gay movement and Richard Nixon, who can show genuine admiration for both Harry Blackmun and traditional Christian values, certainly has a broad reach." By its parallelism, the statement implies that Justice Blackmun and "traditional Christian values" are opposing categories. If that is his meaning, Carlin owes Justice Blackmun an apology.

Justice Blackmun is an active member of a United Methodist congregation. He is a gracious presence at many gatherings. He frequently serves as lector and is an excellent lay preacher whose sermons show a deep knowledge of Scripture. Are faithfulness in worship, love of Scripture, acts of charity and hospitality not "traditional Christian values"?

What underlies my distress at Carlin's implied slight to Justice Blackmun is the insinuation that those like myself who may not agree with Carlin's assessment of the issues surrounding legalized abortion must have forsaken Christian values. I respect the arguments of those opposed to abortion, and I am not writing in an attempt to persuade anyone to forsake well-reasoned positions. I am asking for recognition that many of us have arrived, within the context of Judaeo-Christian teachings, at a reluctant acceptance of the need for legally available abortions. Our view may be wrong, or Carlin's view may be wrong, but we are all committed to "traditional Christian values."

The issue has ecumenical dimensions. The fact that various branches of the Christian church have issued statements with differing views on abortion should not be overlooked. If we are to diffuse the violence that emanates from extremist views and move toward eliminating the need for abortions, we must proceed ecumenically.

BLAIR GILMER MEEKS

Trust the Spirit

Brookline, Mass.

To the Editors: Marion Burkhart's timely article "In the Paraclete I Trust" [May 6] presents a cool approach to the heated argument on the ordination of women. She does so with felicity, wit, and erudition; I thoroughly enjoyed reading her presentation.

I share with many women the frustration and the deep grievance over the pope's apparent shortsighted position. Somehow, for now, "In the Paraclete I Trust" quiets the turbulent waters and holds out the hope that "all shall be well."

MARGARET M. DEVER

Defining definitions

Camillus, N.Y.

To the Editors: Whoever wrote the editorial "Don't Even Think of It" [June 17] needs to do further research into *Pastor aeternus* [1870], the dogmatic constitution of Vatican I, through which it can be seen that the recent letter of the pope on the ordination of women is an *ex cathedra* statement.

According to *Pastor aeternus*, papal infallibility is not limited to definitions of dogma (revealed truth) and its opposite (heresy), but covers all "doctrine" concerning faith and morals: that is, both points of revealed truth and other secondary truths (knowable by reason, or deduced rationally from revelation) which are nec-

(Continued on page 30)

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COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXI, Number 14

Correspondence: 2
Editorial: 3
Alive & kicking: *James T. Fisher* 4
Congressional fatigue syndrome: *Abigail McCarthy* 6
Killing kills the Spirit: *Sidney Callahan* 7
The Oregon trail to death: *Courtney S. Campbell* 9
Danger! Children at work: *Robert A. Senser* 12
Summer '94: The state of politics: *Wilson Carey McWilliams* 15
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 18
Seeing through a glass, darkly: *Paul Baumann* 21

BOOKS

Annunciation, by David Plante: *Elizabeth Beverly* 23
Ancestral Truths, by Sara Maitland: *Daria Donnelly* 24
A Rebel in Defense of Tradition, by Michael Wreszin: *Robert Worth* 26
Separatism and Subculture, by Paula M. Kane: *Jack Deedy* 28
Let's go digital: *William Houghton* 31

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Medical paupers

The American people "want to make sure we fix what's wrong, keep what's right." That was President Bill Clinton's battle-hardened assessment of health-care reform as he appealed for congressional action during his August 3 press conference. But what began as a major campaign promise in 1992 now looks like a fiasco built of a thousand compromises; the bills being considered by House and Senate have lost many of the most important original reform measures. Even so, Mr. Clinton declared the provisions of these bills changes for the better over his own original proposal; he even seemed ready to settle for the half-measures of the Senate bill. Getting health-care reform that settles for less than he wanted may seem like a sensible political compromise to the president in an election year, but the American people need to be sure that the final legislation doesn't leave us worse off than we were two—or twenty—years ago.

Why does the health-care system need reform? Runaway costs are responsible for many of the inequities of the current system. For over twenty years ever-escalating costs have increasingly limited access to medical care by pricing out the working poor, the unemployed, and those with pre-existing conditions. In the 1970s and '80s as insurance premiums moved steadily upward, companies, large and small, found health benefits consuming ever larger portions of their labor dollars; among the consequences have been a turn to part-time workers, a reluctance to rehire laid-off workers when the economy improves, and ultimately, for some companies, the search abroad for a cheaper labor force. As medical care became more expensive, small towns and inner cities saw hospitals close and doctors move to more lucrative areas. In the face of price increases far exceeding the cost-of-living, doctors, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and manufacturers of medical devices professed themselves powerless to contain prices. Costs, they said, were driven upward by patient demand, malpractice suits, research, and competition itself! After all, why should hospitals share MRI scanners when insurance companies would help pay for them through premium increases?

Key features of President Clinton's original proposal, full universal coverage and employer mandates, were tied to strict cost-controlling mechanisms. As a package these would have moved the country toward a more equitable system and done something to curb the costs that were creating inequities. Fourteen percent of the gross domestic product now goes to health care, a far higher percentage than any other nation, yet our system not only forces people to lose their medical coverage but is forcing jobs out of the American economy.

The bills introduced in the House by Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) and in the Senate by George Mitchell (D-Maine) do little to redress the dilemma. They have watered down universal coverage, postponed and diluted employer mandates, and given up on real cost-controlling mechanisms. Remember managed care? and its promise of

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controlling the costs of physician care and hospital treatment? The House bill prohibits managed-care facilities from limiting the number of doctors available to patients in these plans. Remember regional health alliances? and their promise of forcing competition among providers? Gone. Caps on "pain and suffering" awards in malpractice? Gone. Restrictions on lifetime insurance reimbursement—a current cost-controlling mechanisms of insurance companies? Gone. As well the Senate bill includes payment for politically popular prescription drugs and long-term care, but imposes no caps. And so on and so on and so on. Congress is about to vote the minimum of reform, while backing off on the cost-controlling measures that made reform necessary in the first place. The foxes are buying the chicken coops and Congress is selling them for $26 million in campaign contributions.

The claims of Gephardt and Mitchell that costs will be controlled by the threat of future government regulation and market mechanisms is a political delusion. There are few market mechanisms in health care because there is little "customer" choice. Heart attack victims do not take bids for an ambulance service, an intensive-care unit, a cardiac specialist; they buy what is given them. The failure to create artifical market mechanisms, like health-care alliances, or to go to a single-payer system where the government sets prices, means the current system will continue unconstrained. Ultimately this means businesses and individuals who can now afford insurance premiums will be driven out of the system, making medical-care paupers of more and more Americans. Furthermore, allocating more of the nation's resources to health care takes dollars away from housing, education, job training—indeed, from the kind of spending that will create jobs.

In defending the Senate bill, Mr. Mitchell urged that we "not let the perfect become the enemy of the very good." Better that we not let the seriously inadequate become the measure of true reform.

Editor's note: we have previously urged the exclusion of abortion from a basic health insurance package (July 16, 1993); both the House and Senate bills include such coverage, another drawback to both.

REPORT FROM SOCCER TOWN, U.S.A.

ALIVE & KICKING

AN AMERICAN TRADITION

If you wish to know America, a noted European scholar once advised, you must first understand baseball. But on June 17, I quickly discovered that baseball alone would never get me through the summer of 1994. On that bright afternoon, I parked my car in Hoboken, New Jersey, and walked down Washington Street, the city's long main drag. I had once lived in Hoboken and knew all about its "ethnic" flavor. But I was amazed by the international feeling that rippled through the old city like a cool breeze that day. The World Cup of Soccer had come to the nearby Meadowlands, and for every officially sanctioned flag of the participant nations fluttering above Hoboken's street corners, I spotted several homemade banners exhorting the Azzurri (the Italian national team), the Mexicans, and of course the Irish, who, in a matter of hours, would defeat Italy at the Meadowlands in a shocking first-round upset.

Like most Catholics of North Jersey origins, my family background traces the faultlines of an Irish- and Italian-American urban experience. Thus the Ireland-Italy game was seen as a showcase for the resurgent pride of New Jersey's two dominant ethnic groups: "A match made in heaven," George Zoffinger of the New Jersey World Cup Host Committee told a reporter for the *New York Times*, who duly added that the match offered "cousinly competition within the Roman Catholic family, right out of a John O'Hara story."

The match generated scores of articles on ethnicity, religion, and immigrant history covering not just New Jersey but the entire New York metropolitan area. Many waxed nostalgic about bygone neighborhood rivalries dissolved in time and intermarriage. Others sought to link soccer's putative unpopularity in this country with the immigrant experience: the newcomers' willingness to leave most things from the old world behind. When analysis failed, there were plenty of Italian-Americans to be found discussing the elaborate menus for their tailgate parties, while Irish-born singer Christy O'Connor informed readers of the *New York Daily News* that the World Cup "is more important to us than the Hail Mary." I was fascinated by the assumption underlying much of the background reporting on the World Cup that equated ethnic Catholicism with a passion for sports, an issue first treated by the late John Tracy Ellis nearly forty years ago in a celebrated essay where he lamented the inveterate "athleticism" of Catholic culture and the dearth of Catholic intellectuals.

Yet soccer itself is invariably described as a game of either the "old" world or the "new" immigrants who have flocked to this country since 1965. Not being among the 16 million Americans who actually play the game, I wondered if there might be some deeper historical connection between soccer, urban America, and the civil religion that has bound this nation together. To find out I paid a visit to Kearny, New Jersey, or, as it became widely touted in the days to come, "Soccer Town, U.S.A."

I felt I enjoyed just a slight edge on the hordes of reporters and camera crews who descended on Kearny because not only do my mother's family's "roots" lie there; my cousins live next door to Charlie McEwan. McEwan, an affable, burly Scots-American had coached three star players now on the United States national team—Tabare Ramos, John Harkes, and Tony Meola—when they had played as twelve-year-olds for the Thistle Football Club of Kearny. Imagine a working-class city of 34,000 providing three starters for, let's say, the New York Yankees, and you have some idea of the mystique this town packs. (Meola, incidentally, still lives in nearby Hillside, but

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is a pure product of Kearny youth soccer.) Kearny and the neighboring town of Harrison provide the setting for a familial creation myth I have fashioned over a lifetime of rootless flight (even the name, CAR-nee, evokes the incantatory music of place names captured so hauntingly in Irish playwright Brian Friel's "Faith Healer"), but in speaking with Charlie McEwan I saw that myth being altered and recast in ways that challenged some of my cherished assumptions about religion, ethnicity, and urban America.

Charlie explained that soccer came to Kearny in the 1870s with the Scottish immigrants brought over to work for the Clark Thread and Congoleum Nairn companies. The Scots-American Club, founded in 1928, fielded teams that competed in an extensive network of ethnic leagues, some still active today on weekend afternoons in places like Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. The Scots-Catholics in Kearney tended to play for the rival Irish-American Club, but over time the sport came to transcend ethnic and religious distinctions and generated a new vision of community based solely on a shared passion for the game. In Harkes, Meola, and Ramos, Kearny produced representatives of the three great waves of immigration to America, from the Scots of the mid-nineteenth century to the Italians early in this century and finally to more recent arrivals from places like Ramos's native Uruguay.

While working for a local chemical company, Charlie McEwan led his Thistle Club team all across the Northeast for matches. He even took the team to Scotland, where they lodged at a women's conservatory in Glasgow. One Saturday evening, their host informed McEwan that Mass would be offered the next morning at a Catholic chapel on the grounds. McEwan recalls, "It was the first time I had even thought about the religious makeup of the club." He was surprised to discover that eighteen of his twenty-two players were indeed Catholics.

That did not surprise me. What did was that Charlie, a Scots-American, urban Protestant, was jovially bantering in the living room of my Irish-Catholic relatives in a town I had always linked with some primal, unmelted core of ethno-religious tribal identity diluted only by the suburban *hegira* of the 1950s and 1960s. This paradigm of ethnic declension and "white flight" has been dominant for so long that I found myself asking whether the temptation to present Kearny as anomalous—a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, soccer-loving town, absorbing "old" and "new" immigrants alike—says more about those, like myself, who are in but not fully of the neighborhoods, than about these communities themselves.

I wonder sometimes if the stories of postwar America many of us tell—whether as historians, novelists, or sportswriters—focus so heavily on that flight from cities to suburbia because the products of that experience are as conflicted—in our own way—as an earlier generation of the "uprooted" who sought to explore their new identity as Americans. The ambivalence we feel toward "old neighborhoods," real and imagined, may compel us at times to neglect the persistent vitality of those communities that have often survived quite well without us. In the 1950s and '60s, the age of the great migration—especially for ethnic Catholics—the Scots- and Irish-American clubs of Kearny flourished and fielded soccer teams that competed against dozens of clubs representing other "hyphenated" Americans, in the process fostering a version of multiculturalism that belies the myth of the ethnic ghettoes we offer as our origins.

Fans of Kearny soccer will speculate for years to come on whether the outcome of the U.S. team's second-round defeat by Brazil might have been different had John Harkes not been suspended for committing two yellow-card fouls in the first round, or had Tabare Ramos not been knocked out of play by a Brazilian defender's elbow in the midst of a brilliant performance. But their mere presence in the tournament bore witness to an urban American sporting tradition as old and continuous as any this nation has to offer, perpetually re-invented by newcomers who don't need to be told that, in Kearny at least, soccer is as American as a game can be. JAMES T. FISHER

James T. Fisher teaches in the American Studies Program at Yale University.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 9.

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY TWO FACULTY POSITIONS

The Vancouver School of Theology, a multidenominational school affiliated with U.B.C., invites applications for two full-time faculty positions at the Assistant or Associate Professor level. The appointments are tenure-track positions with an initial three-year term to begin July 1, 1995.

Successful candidates for positions in **New Testament Studies** and **Pastoral Theology** will normally have a Ph.D. or Th.D. in their field and some experience in pastoral ministry. Persons chosen will be expected to teach in the school's M.Div., M.T.S., M.P.S., and Th.M., programs, as well as the Continuing and Lay Education programs.

Applicants for the **New Testament** position should have some experience in ministry. An opportunity for limited assignments in postgraduate teaching may emerge.

Applicants for the **Pastoral Theology** position should have some expertise in social sciences and considerable experience in active ministry. An internal candidate will be considered.

Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience. Send curriculum vitae and three letters of reference to Dr. William Phillips, Principal, Vancouver School of Theology, 6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4. Closing date for applications is September 1, 1994.

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CONGRESSIONAL FATIGUE SYNDROME

THE CURES ARE KILLING THE PATIENT

Some of my best friends are congressmen and women. Voicing that statement anywhere in the country today might well cause people to look at me askance. What? *Friends* with those inept and corrupt persons whose very mention draws an easy laugh from the audiences of the nightly talk shows? *Friends* among those whose names evoke instant hostility from the callers-in to the radio chat shows and instant sneers from the hosts ranging from Rush Limbaugh to Pat Buchanan?

Yes, friends. And friends who may not be here in Washington much longer. Every month *Roll Call*, the Capitol Hill newspaper, publishes what the editor calls the casualty list—the list of the members of Congress who are resigning or have announced that they are not going to run again. It grows longer and longer. So far this year, fifty-four members of the House of Representatives are leaving. The Senate majority leader, George Mitchell (D-Maine), has announced his resignation, as have such worthy senators as John Danforth (R-Mo.) and David Boren (D-Okla.).

In a conversation recently, *Washington Post* columnist David Broder said this exodus means that more than 50 percent of the next term congressmen and women will be first or second termers, persons with very little experience of the complicated legislative process. Many of them are from the elective class of '92, most of whom ran "against Washington." Except for a former governor and some new members with a history in state legislatures, Broder noted, it is hard to see how soon they will shake down as effective members, or if they will.

A number of the retiring members have more personal reasons for resigning—age, illness, the desire to spend more time with their families, etc.—but many are simply tired of the unearned cynicism about their role in public service and the abuse they must endure as a result of it. Criticism of Congress has a long history in the press of this country but today it seems to have become all-pervasive in the general populace. Check the letters columns of any newspaper or magazine. Check the comics pages.

Norman Ornstein, the American Enterprise Institute's expert on Congress and elections, tells me that the outlook for the composition of the next Congress is very discouraging. He finds no sense of an overall concern for the public good in the vision and campaign rhetoric of those challenging incumbents, and nothing that speaks of a long-term plan for government. There is an exploitation of institutions and a pandering to those who have brought false panaceas for our problems, false panaceas like term limits and the line item veto. Veteran members dedicated to public service will find it hard to serve with such newcomers.

Both the anti-establishment candidates and the public to which they appeal apparently have no sense of the Congress as an institution central to our democratic society. (The Perot notion of nationwide town meetings in which people would be polled about legislation is an example of this failure writ large.) Legislation and regulation are not the result of collected individual opinions but of the careful crafting of laws by means of collaborative effort, coalition, and compromise. The dictionary definition of an institution ("a well-established and structural pattern of behavior or relationships that is accepted as a fundamental part of a culture like the institution of marriage and the institution of the family") may be adapted to the Congress as the well-established and structured pattern and process of making laws, their applications, and regulations. Because the mass media cannot seem to cover process effectively but focus only on win-lose conflicts as newsworthy, a television-fed people has little information on which to evaluate lawmakers.

"He said his first word—resign."

Ironically, some of the obstacles members of Congress encounter in achieving their legislative goals stem from well-meant efforts in the last thirty years to improve Congress. Well-meant nongovernmental influences like Common Cause and Ralph Nader's associates have helped to weaken the once-powerful chairman and committee system. Former president Gerald Ford, once a minority leader in the House, speaking to the National Press Club this spring, ruminated about the so-called reforms which he feels have caused the Congress to lose the ability to manage itself.

> When the surge of well-intentioned liberals came...they did away for all intents and purposes with seniority. They authorized the establishment of the multiplicity of subcommittees. I don't know, we've got more subcommittees than members now....The people in authority no longer can run the institution.
>
> When I first came to the Congress in 1949, Sam Rayburn ran the institution. And Joe Martin did almost as well. We...got all the business done, including the Marshall Plan, [and] we adjourned July 4th. And the members of the House and Senate went home...to get reacquainted with the constituents....

Another development that has weakened

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Congress in the last three decades is the immensely increased cost of running for a House or Senate seat. In one district I know of, a congressman could once hope to win with a campaign outlay of less than $30,000. Today he or she would need at least half a million dollars. Multiply that by tens and twenties to estimate the cost of winning a Senate seat. As a result incumbents must work at fund raising all year long—an effort which depletes their energy and certainly subtracts from the time and attention they can give to legislation and the needs of their constituents.

The outrageous cost of campaigning is caused, first of all, by the high price of television advertising—the only way in this media-ridden age one can hope to reach a majority of voters. A second cause is the ever-growing dependence on the new (and, I believe, largely unnecessary) profession of political consultants and poll-takers. Thirty years ago candidates could rely on their well-honed political instincts and personal contact: through letters, visits with constituents, and public meetings. Today they are not taken seriously without "experts" at their sides.

Norman Ornstein sees the opprobrium in which both Congress and the executive branch are held as part of a worldwide malaise. There are weak leaders everywhere, he says, and scandals in government after government. Attacks on the establishment come from neo-Fascists in Italy, neo-Nazis in Germany, radicals in the major English parties, and so on. "All over the world people are groping for a set of values in the post-cold war era," he says. "The thing they know is real is the global economy and the terrible uncertainty it brings. The company they go to work for today may be gone tomorrow; jobs that once meant lifetime security can now disappear over night." Frightened, fearful of the future, they turn against their representatives.

Can we save and reinvigorate our institutions and thus save democracy? Oddly enough, television, so much a source of our problems, may be an instrument of their solution. "Television can not only get people thinking; it can even get them to behave like citizens and grapple with the basic issues of a free society," writes E.J. Dionne (*Washington Post*, July 11). And, Dionne asks, "Why does it only happen during a spectacular murder case?" He argues that the coverage of the preliminary hearing in the Simpson trial proved that viewers could be interested in constitutional issues, understand various bits of evidence, and follow arguments based on facts. Can they do the same in regard to the political issues which affect their lives, like the health-care debate? We can hope that some good producers will see the possibility and grasp the opportunity. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Sidney Callahan

KILLING KILLS THE SPIRIT

THE NEED FOR NONVIOLENT DISCIPLINE

The killing of abortionist John B. "Doc" Britton by militant prolife activist Paul Hill horrifies prolife advocates dedicated to nonviolence. It's particularly dreadful to see Hill claiming Christian justification for blasting Britton and his escort full in the face with a 12-gauge shotgun.

Hill maintains that this homicide was a defensible use of deadly force undertaken to prevent more killing of the unborn. Well, yes, I can share Hill's desire to end the unjust killings of abortion, but I can't see why an abhorrence of abortion makes *his* equally gruesome act of killing morally acceptable.

Hill's action is wrong not only because killing adults (as opposed to the unborn) is an illegal act. Obviously certain social practices must be morally resisted by illegal means if a strong enough case for civil disobedience can be mounted, although it's never easy to do when you're committed to a civil society governed by law.

The more basic immorality of Hill's vigilantism and the flaw in his moral reasoning stems from his blindness to the fact that a political assassin and abortionist act on the same morally unacceptable presumption. Both assume that certain human beings have the right to kill or extinguish other lives when certain conditions and future consequences are deemed to warrant it. To engage in either abortion or assassination validates the principle that an individual has a right to kill and take another's human life—in a good cause.

The key moral question to my mind is whether there can ever be justifiable homicides, apart from the most exceptional of unavoidable emergencies or the rarest of medical abortions needed to save a life. Arguments for other morally permissible killings, such as those put forth in defense of capital punishment, just war, euthanasia, or suicide, appear inadequate. "Thou Shalt Not Kill" can hardly be a command limited to the innocent, the good, our compatriots, our allies, or mature fellow citizens. Christians, for their part, have been given a stricter injunction: to forgive and love your enemies and persecutors, and to do good to those who harm you (or harm your children).

Yet despite the ban on harming one's neighbor, evil must be overcome by good. Arduous struggles to bring about the justice and righteousness of God's Kingdom must be taken up. So how can we resist evil without engaging in evil? Surely, active nonviolent resistance is a creative solution. Christian thinkers such as Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jim Douglass, and Walter Wink, to name only a few, have developed a sophisticated theology of peaceful Christian nonviolent resistance for our time.

Fortunately, Christian theological thinkers on nonviolence do not stand alone. Because of Gandhi's political successes and the increasing number of victories of other nonviolent resistance movements, a new secular field of strategic studies of nonviolent conflict has emerged. The most prominent innovator in this arena is Gene Sharp of Harvard; in his 1973 ground-

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breaking study, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Extending Horizons Books), Sharp catalogues 198 methods of nonviolent resistance and describes the many heretofore unheralded successes of these methods. Sharp incisively analyzes the way power operates and then shows the many ways power can be thwarted. His work has inspired other strategic thinkers, including military strategists.

While sadly mulling over the Paul Hill debacle, I happened to spot a book on our library's recent acquisitions shelf, Peter Ackerman's and Christopher Kruegler's *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Greenwood). I immediately grabbed it and became immersed in the authors' analysis of different nonviolent campaigns. Building on Sharp's previous work, Ackerman and Kruegler provide six detailed case studies to test their derived principles for effective nonviolent resistance: principles of development, principles of engagement, and principles of conception. Included are familiar accounts, such as Gandhi's Indian resistance movement and Solidarity's campaign for free unions in Poland, as well as lesser-known struggles like the Danes' wartime resistance to the Nazis and a 1944 civic strike in El Salvador which brought down a dictator.

Ackerman and Kruegler are not interested in the religious and moral justifications for espousing nonviolence; they seem to focus on nonviolence because of its political effectiveness. Their *realpolitik* approach emphasizes the crucial decision making necessary at different levels of policy and stratagems—in order to respond to the confusing and unpredictable events which always rapidly unfold. This strictly secular analysis, while too narrow in scope, does provide some intriguing pointers for peaceful prolife activists.

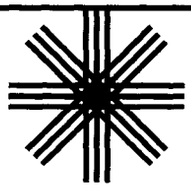
First, Ackerman and Kruegler admit that the outcome of any struggle, nonviolent or military, is always in doubt, but they make a good case for their claim that attention to strategy, critical thinking, and constant reassessments and adjustments will always make a difference. Intelligence counts. Nonviolent conflicts are not decided simply by the amount of endurance or repression the different sides can muster. Nor does the power and repression of the opponent always determine the outcome.

Perhaps crazed irrational fanatics bent on genocide can hardly be stopped, but historically the brutal Nazis in Denmark were resisted as successfully as the more civilized British in India. In fact a more liberal regime which cleverly deploys strategic violence in tandem with its own nonviolent methods (making meaningless concessions, coopting conferences, etc.) may be as formidable an opponent as one can face. (Is there a message for us here?)

Another point surely relevant for the prolife movement is found in the authors' explication of their principle about how to "Maintain Nonviolent Discipline." When individuals give into violence they squander all the hard-won psychological and material advantages gained by disciplined nonviolent resistance. Ackerman and Kruegler conclude that assassinations, even of a dictator, never work, because "the structure of power is never simple." Other, often worse individuals will inevitably take the offender's place. Moreover, a violent repugnant act causes the nonviolent resistance campaign to lose moral credibility; potential allies are repelled and reprisals will seem justified.

The only remedy for violent "helpers" who cannot be controlled is for the nonviolent campaign "to distance aggressively the nonviolent movement from those [violent] groups and make sure one's own supporters [and outside observers] understand why that has been done." So let's immediately set to work getting together a public formal condemnation of violent prolife tactics harmful to persons, to be endorsed by all the leaders of the prolife movement interested in maintaining nonviolent discipline.

Violence when employed in abortion or assassination may look quick and efficient, but violent means take their toll. Even if we exclude questions of sin, other objections to violence can be made. Tough secular strategists here point out that once the thought of using violence resides in someone's mind, "there is an inhibiting effect upon his [or her] ability to explore fully the possibilities of nonviolence or take the risks inherent in serious struggle." Imagination, persistence, and the capacity to accept suffering in a good cause are likely to be impaired when violence is an acceptable option, ready at hand. When will we ever learn that in all sorts of crude and subtle ways, killing kills the Spirit? □



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

The Friars of the Atonement announce the fifth annual Graymoor Prize, to be awarded for the best essay on any aspect of ecumenical or interreligious affairs. Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2,500-4,000 words should be submitted to the editors of COMMONWEAL. The winning essay will receive a prize of $1,000 and will be published in COMMONWEAL.

Deadline: October 3, 1994. Announcement of Prize: December 16, 1994. The prize-winning essay will be published in COMMONWEAL's January 13, 1995, issue. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors after January 1.

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THE OREGON TRAIL TO DEATH

MEASURE 16

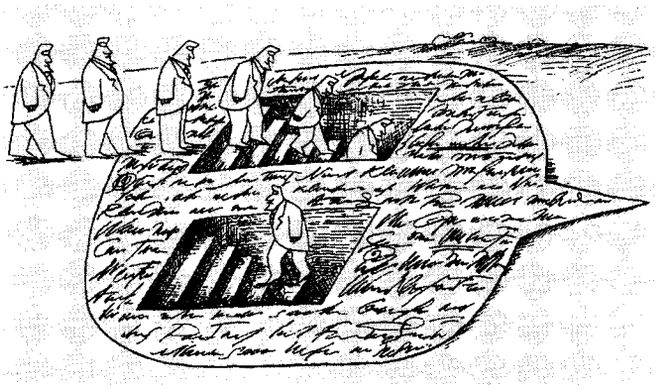
COURTNEY S. CAMPBELL

The first "patient" of Dr. Jack Kevorkian's "medicide" was a woman from Portland, Oregon, Janet Adkins, who had been diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer's. The national headquarters of the Hemlock Society, and the home of Derek Humphry, author of the best-selling book *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying*, are located in Eugene, Oregon. Thus, it comes as little surprise that the state of Oregon will soon join its neighboring states of Washington (1991) and California (1992) in debating and voting on a citizen initiative, Measure 16, to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The expectation of the umbrella Oregon Right to Die Coalition is that the Oregon "Death with Dignity Act" [DDA], unlike its failed predecessors, will appeal to a majority of voters this November. If that scenario occurs, Oregon will have, consistent with its self-cultivated image of pioneering moral progressivism, blazed a new trail in providing alternative end-of-life choices for the terminally ill. Whether this trail should be followed is an issue certain to be divisive in our culture for many years to come.

As approved by the Oregon Supreme Court, the DDA asks voters the following: "Shall law allow terminally ill adult Oregon patients voluntary informed choice to obtain physician's prescription for drugs to end life?" While I shall explicate later some of the statutory safeguards and legislative loopholes embedded in this language, it is important initially to recognize the difference in scope between the DDA and the failed Initiative 119 in Washington and Proposition 161 in California. In those referendums, voters were asked to approve "physician aid-in-dying," which included not only assistance in suicide but also active euthanasia, such as lethal injections, by physicians. By contrast, the Oregon DDA restricts the role of a physician to providing the prescription for a drug such as Seconal to end one's life. However, having obtained the prescription, the patient may elect not to use it. Thus the professional's role is deemed by proponents as not morally compromised. Indeed, according to Eli Stutsman, legal counsel for Oregon Right to Die, the DDA simply would "codify existing medical practice" for the terminally ill, thus permitting conduct which is now performed secretly to be performed openly without fear of prosecution (personal correspondence, June 14, 1994).

Stutsman contends that the process of drafting the DDA occurred with three principal constituencies in mind. First, the DDA is intended to advance the interests of patient autonomy by making the right to die "a fundamental civil right." Second, the DDA would ensure that health-care professionals can provide the form of care that best promotes the patient's welfare with guarantees of legal immunity. Finally, the DDA offers to the public a model of "reasonable regulation" of physician assistance-in-suicide with safeguards that the public will understand as "sensible without being onerous." While the public debate is not yet in full swing in Oregon, the efforts to satisfy the interests of these constituencies have so far been successful in dissuading several major political players from expressing opposition to the DDA.

The Oregon counterparts of the political parties and medical associations that opposed the Washington and California initiatives have thus far either endorsed the DDA or adopted a position of "neutrality." A moderate subgroup within the Republican party (The Dorchester Group) endorsed the DDA at its annual conference in February. The traditionally more liberal state Democratic party could not be this specific, although it did affirm in its 1994 platform: "We support the right of ter-



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minally ill persons to control their own end-of-life decisions." The bipartisan support of the DDA has certainly delighted proponents: "Death with dignity is an issue that cuts across the political spectrum because it involves personal choice," commented Geoff Sugarman, the executive director of Oregon Right to Die, following the March adoption of the Democratic platform.

Perhaps even more indicative of the state of public discourse are the responses of caregiving associations to the DDA. The Washington Medical Association and the California Medical Association opposed their respective initiatives as "fundamentally inconsistent" with the physician's role as healer, as did the American Medical Association. The Oregon Medical Association [OMA], by contrast, agreed in May to a motion "to neither oppose nor endorse physician-assisted suicide." OMA President Dr. Leigh Dolin publicly discredited concerns about a "slippery slope" impact of the DDA and instead recommended that his fellow physicians listen more to their patients: "We need to hear from the people of Oregon what to do" (Eugene *Register-Guard*, May 2, 1994). It says something profoundly disturbing about the vocational commitments of Oregonian physicians (and perhaps, the medical profession more broadly) that a fundamental matter of medical ethics is presumed to be a choice for the *vox populi*. In what other realm of medicine are physicians so willing to abdicate their power and professional responsibility to public preferences?

A similar scenario has been played out in the context of hospice. The Washington State Hospice Organization and the California Hospice Association each opposed its relevant initiative, as did the National Hospice Organization. The Oregon Hospice Association [OHA] appointed an ethics task force in 1992 to reconsider its 1991 resolution that expressed opposition to assisted suicide and active euthanasia; this ethics task force is currently at a complete impasse, which makes the prospect of a "neutral" position very likely. Some individual hospices have expressed opposition to the DDA, while others have expressed the sentiment that "hospice does what the voters of Oregon want," and have adopted "neutral" policies that will respect personal choice should the DDA pass. Having served on the OHA's ethics task force for some eighteen months ending in March, I find it difficult to see how hospice can affirm neutrality on the DDA without betraying or modifying some fundamental commitments in its traditional caregiving mission, including the value to "neither prolong nor *hasten* death."

These shifts in political and institutional perspective suggest that Oregon Right to Die learned the lessons of failure in Washington and California. It believes that the "sensible safeguards" alluded to by its counsel, Mr. Stutsman, will reassure voters that the DDA will both enhance patient choice and preclude abuse. Using the terminology of the ballot question, let me review and briefly comment on these procedural mechanisms:

● *Terminal illness.* The DDA limits "qualified patients" to persons suffering from an incurable or irreversible health condition that within reasonable medical judgment (made by an attending and a consulting physician) will eventuate in death within six months. It is, however, unlikely that this restriction will remain should the DDA be approved, because it discriminates against persons with similar health conditions who do not fall within the six-month period. The proponents of the DDA deem it important to establish the six-month duration as a precedent that can subsequently be expanded to encompass persons with, for example, early-stage Alzheimer's or HIV disease.

● *Adult Oregon patients.* Proponents have repeatedly emphasized that the DDA would apply only to Oregon residents, and that Oregon need not fear becoming "the suicide destination" of the United States. The problem is that the state's residency requirements are very ambiguous and connected to specific contexts, such as obtaining a driver's license. There is, quite obviously, no such legal precedent to establish residency for assistance-in-suicide, and the DDA itself nowhere defines residency status. Oregon Right to Die contends that since a relationship with a physician licensed to practice in Oregon is also a prerequisite for assistance in suicide, physician licensure provides one necessary check on a quick suicide. However, opponents, organized principally through the umbrella Coalition for Compassionate Care [CCC], contend that this stipulation will become more a drawing card than a safeguard: In the absence of legal precedent, a common law definition of residency status as a "declaration of intent" to become a resident will govern. State legislative counsel have indicated that a court challenge will have to be brought to determine the "common and ordinary meaning" of the term "resident" within the context of assisted suicide (personal correspondence, June 14, 1994), meaning that the questions will not be resolved prior to the November vote.

● *Voluntary informed choice.* The DDA presumes that the diagnosis of terminal illness has no significant influence on the decision-making capacity of a patient. The attending physician is required to inform the patient of the diagnosis, prognosis, potential risks of the prescribed medication; probable result of the prescribed medication; and feasible alternatives, such as comfort care, hospice care, and pain control, as well as the right to rescind a request. The patient is also required to make, fifteen days apart, two oral requests for life-ending medication, as well as one written request which must occur at least forty-eight hours prior to receipt of the medication. These stipulations are deemed to ensure the authenticity and voluntariness of the patient's choice. Moreover, either physician may refer the patient for counseling if he or she suspects the patient is depressed or suffers from impaired judgment. Yet, empirical evidence suggests that depression is often missed or misdiagnosed because the medical training of physicians has focused more on pathologies of the body than those of the mind. The fundamental issue is, then, the appropriate level of trust to vest in physicians regarding their diagnoses of depression or other psychological impairment. The Coalition for Compassionate Care has also raised the prospect of some patients' choices being involuntary because of background social conditions, such as familial pressures, finances, or health-care insurance. Thus, although the DDA would make "coercion" of a patient's choice a Class A felony, the CCC be-

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lieves that in some circumstances the "right to die" will become a "duty to die."

● *Physicians' prescriptions.* Physicians who participate in assisted suicide must be licensed to practice medicine in Oregon, must verify that the patient's decision is informed, and confirm that the patient is aware he or she can rescind the request. Physicians (or "health care providers") are not obliged, however, to acquiesce in a patient's request; if providers are unable or unwilling to do so, they are required to transfer the relevant medical records of the patient should the patient obtain a new physician.

The claim of proponents that the DDA will simply codify current physician practice must be viewed with a great deal of skepticism for several reasons. It is not at all clear that physician assistance in suicide is already integrated into the dying process; surveys of physicians do indicate a majority would support such a practice if it were legal, but only a minority have actually participated in such an act. Second, even if physician assistance were customary practice, this does not mean the ethical question of whether this practice "ought" to be permissible and customary is answered. Finally, it does not speak highly of the *moral* vocation of the medical profession that its principal concern with the DDA is the question of a physician's legal immunity.

● *Guarding the gatekeepers.* If the safeguards are not as secure as proponents contend, nor as open-ended as opponents maintain, a further issue concerns monitoring of the application of the procedural safeguards. The documenting and reporting requirements of the DDA can be easily circumvented: Not all cases of assisted suicide will be reviewed by the Oregon Health Division [OHD], and reviews of specific cases will not be made a matter of public record. The OHD is required simply to submit an "annual statistical report" to the public.

It is striking that the DDA follows directly on the heels of a major revision in 1993 to Oregon's advance directive law, the Health Care Decisions Act [HCDA]. The new law, effective in November 1993, permits patients or designated proxies to forgo all forms of life-prolonging medical treatment as well as "food and water supplied artificially by medical device" under any of the following circumstances: imminent death; permanent unconsciousness; advanced progressive illness; extraordinary suffering. The HCDA also guarantees that patients will receive all necessary and sufficient comfort care and pain control. The legislative history of the HCDA shows that such choices and guarantees were made in part to preclude citizens from resorting to suicide or euthanasia to end their life. Yet, I can attest that a vast majority of Oregon citizens are not aware of the expansive rights they *already* have regarding control over their dying and death, and the DDA itself makes no reference to such rights. Thus, an uninformed citizenry might well think that its only choice in dying is between technological vitalism and assisted suicide.

It must also be said that the DDA initiative imposes its own vision of the good death upon Oregonians. The DDA is quite explicit that assistance in suicide achieves death in "a humane and dignified manner." The moral appeal to dignity, however, is constituted by a need for control and choice over private decisions; community and interdependency are antithetical to this vision of dignity. It is thus not surprising that the DDA encourages, but does not require, family notification of the patient's request to die. Only a very truncated sense of humanity and dignity would not see that the manner and timing of one's dying would be a momentous matter to others in one's community.

The Coalition for Compassionate Care, the principal organized opponents to the DDA, is an umbrella group of religious groups, including the Oregon Catholic Conference, senior citizen associations, and organizations for the disabled. The substantive objections of the CCC are rooted in appeals to the sanctity of human life and concern for vulnerable and marginalized patients in society. Some individuals whose organizations are members of the coalition accept that under very limited circumstances, physician-assisted suicide may be the most morally justifiable and humane course of action to take, but these few situations should not dictate public policy. The DDA is, in any event, seen as unnecessary given the expansive rights of Oregonians under the new advance directive law.

The CCC may take comfort from the comments of an astute observer of Oregon politics, William Lunch of Oregon State University, who has noted that most citizen initiatives fail because the electorate is wary of "change for the unknown." Lunch contends that there are additional factors that will weigh against voter approval of the DDA. First, voters will likely suffer "information fatigue" from confronting as many as eighteen measures on the fall ballot; put another way, the DDA will not "stand out" in the fall run-up to election day. Second, Lunch maintains that the political weight of the Roman Catholic moral tradition and its Oregon constituency will bring a decisive bloc of voters into opposition of the DDA. It is important in this respect to note that in the midst of debate over the 1991 Washington initiative, the bishops of the Oregon Catholic Conference and the Washington State Catholic Conference issued "Living and Dying Well: A Pastoral Letter about the End of Life," which condemned assisted suicide and euthanasia as a denial of personal autonomy and "a lethal, violent, and unacceptable way of terminating care for the infirm."

Although the largest denomination in the state, the Catholic community in Oregon still comprises only 11 percent of the state's population, by itself far smaller than the 17 percent of the state's "unchurched" population. Thus, it is unclear how decisive the Catholic influence, as part of the Coalition for Compassion Care, will actually be in both the public debate and in overall voting patterns. Moreover, public, political, and professional attitudes toward physician-assisted suicide may, as illustrated above, have already changed in advance of the DDA. This is clearly the assumption underlying Oregon Right to Die's view that the DDA will merely codify existing medical practice. If so, voters and others who would follow this Oregon trail to death would be well advised to heed John Updike's words: "Death, once it enters in, leaves its muddy footprints everywhere." □

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DANGER! CHILDREN AT WORK
(AND THEY'RE DOING IT FOR US)

ROBERT A. SENSER

They can't say they weren't warned. Four years ago, I told a group of leading employers in Bangladesh that they'd be in trouble if the children working in their garment factories were shown on television in the United States, the principal market for Bangladesh's garment exports.

At first they flatly denied that they employed girls and boys as young as ten or eleven. Any worker who looked that young, they said, was simply a malnourished adult. They backed down, however, when they realized I knew better. In Western eyes, it's true, Asians often look younger than they are. But I already knew from Bangladeshi sources, including a factory manager in Dhaka, that many garment workers are younger than fourteen, the minimum age for factory work under Bangladeshi law. And in visits to factories I had myself seen unmistakably underage children at work; I even had pictures of them.

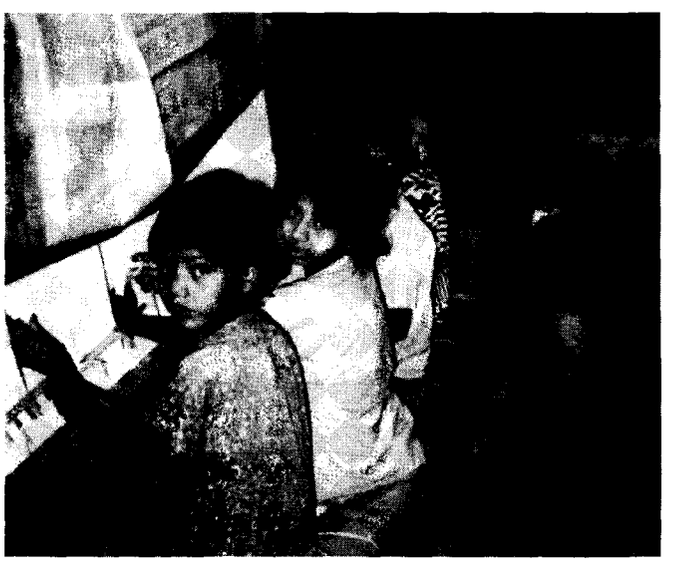
Hoping to prod the employers into initiating reforms, I pointed out that, with miniaturized video technology, it would be a snap to document how girls and boys work far into the night making clothes for American and other foreign consumers. I recalled that CBS's "60 Minutes," using a hidden camera, had captured scenes of prisoners in China producing goods for export to the U.S.

A year later, my warning came true. A "Dateline NBC" camera crew visiting Dhaka didn't even need a hidden camera. Posing as American buyers shopping for a new source, they toured two garment factories and readily got permission to use a home video camera. As a result, a U.S. network audience in nearly 14 million households saw vivid examples of how Bangladesh's booming garment industry employs underage children, mostly girls, by the tens of thousands. The children, who were busy helping make shirts for U.S. stores, said that they earned $12 to $20 a month, or 5 to 8 cents an hour, and were locked into the plants until the day's production quota was met, sometimes well past midnight. One nine-year-old girl, who had been working for six months, pleaded with the crew's interpreter: "I don't want to stay here any more. Will you take me out with you?"

Revelations of such exploitation have long been a staple in the print media. But in an era when problems need television validation to be considered important, the "Dateline" exposé and other TV productions like it provided the most powerful evidence of an alarming trend: millions of girls and boys in developing countries are making clothes, shoes, carpets, dolls, soccer balls, cutlery, fireworks, and many other products for consumers in the United States and other developed countries. They are at work even in jobs that would seem far too demanding for them. In Pakistan, for example, pre-teen children held in bondage grind and sand some of the $33 million worth of surgical equipment exported to the United States every year.

According to a United Nations agency, the International Labor Organization [ILO], the number of children at jobs instead of in school is increasing throughout the world, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the world's children. Most toil in agriculture, where youngsters have traditionally helped their parents and relatives. Now, however, this ancient agricultural custom has spilled over into the modern sectors of some developing countries, particularly in industries now prospering through mass production for export. Competitive pressures lead individual countries to ignore their own laws on the minimum working age even in hazardous industries, such as those manufacturing fireworks and glassware. In short, the global economy is clearly promoting child labor.

Sometimes (more likely: often), working conditions are bru-



ROBERT A. SENSER *writes frequently on issues of human rights in employment. His most recent article in* Commonweal *was "Dragon in the Toy Factory" [October 8, 1993], concerning conditions in third-world factories supplying U.S. importers.*

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tal. In some Asian developing countries, there are no laws prohibiting physical punishment of children, so that such abuses are rarely documented. One exception was a 1985 survey conducted by the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops of Bangladesh. Of 1,000 female garment workers interviewed—children and young women—101 said that they had suffered corporal punishment at work.

Children remain the most frequent victims of on-the-job physical abuse. Male supervisors discipline them for making "mistakes," such as miscounts in packing, by striking them on the head or forcing them to kneel on the floor or stand on their head for ten to thirty minutes, as well as threatening them with burns from hot irons or scalding from hot water. In Indonesia and some other Asian countries, such violence is common enough to spark periodic protests against Korean, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong managers of factories in export industries.

Slowly, the realization is dawning that something is out of whack in the global economic modernization process, and that consumers in the developed countries bear some responsibility for bringing about reform. After hearing a radio broadcast on child labor in Asia while he was on a road trip, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) put his staff to work researching the subject. In August 1992 he introduced the Child Labor Deterrence Act to prohibit importing into the United States any manufactured or mined product made in whole or in part by children under fifteen. A similar bill offered in 1989 by then Congressman Donald J. Pease of Ohio had been sidetracked when the Bush administration successfully argued that any such U.S. initiative should be negotiated in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT]. Under congressional mandate, U.S. delegates at that time did propose a GATT "social clause," which would include a ban on child labor. But GATT officials—an in-group of trade-oriented specialists, for whom any linkage between international trade and human rights is an abomination—summarily blocked even a discussion of the issue.

This year, parallel to the Harkin bill, the Clinton administration revived the social clause as an agenda item for the new World Trade Organization [WTO], where the prevailing sentiment still is "Thanks, but no thanks—let the International Labor Organization handle it." At an ILO conference in Geneva in June, its director general, Michel Hansenne, wisely refrained from accepting sole jurisdiction on the issue, and even urged the WTO to break new ground by applying trade sanctions against countries with serious worker-rights violations.

Meanwhile, for the first time in its seventy-five-year history, the ILO is waging a major campaign against child labor, the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor [IPEC]. Launched in 1992 with a $30-million grant from Germany, IPEC concentrates on educational and technical-assistance projects in eight countries: Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey. The projects in each country depend on a national steering committee, with members from the government, employer groups, and trade unions, but usually not including nongovernmental figures who are the most active in combating child labor. The governments have a way of channeling IPEC funds into "safe" projects and away from any that might actually affect the status quo.

Because the Harkin bill seems to have a better chance of becoming law than the Pease bill did, it has stirred controversy abroad, especially in South Asian countries with bad child labor records. In Bangladesh, where garment factories make up the country's largest private industry, employers and government officials have relentlessly pilloried the bill and its author: Harkin is more of a household name in Dhaka than in Washington, D.C. But the controversy has done some good. The mere existence of the bill has driven a few better-known Dhaka garment factories—those most likely to be visited by foreigners—to comply with their country's law.

Of course, the Harkin bill is also controversial in Washington. The reason is simple: The bill will have teeth. (The exact penalties to be imposed for violations are still in negotiation, as is the minimum wage.) The business leaders and economists who oppose the bill have a name for any effort to enact enforceable rules governing trade: It's "protectionism," and they're against it.

Well, not really. Or not always. It depends. Take the "piracy" of intellectual property rights. Illegally copying audio tapes, video tapes, compact disks, computer programs, motion pictures, books, and other intellectual property on a mass production basis is a booming industry in some developing countries. Only when the U.S. government finally threatened sanctions under the 1988 U.S. Trade Act did Thailand, Indonesia, and China start to take some action against the widespread piracy in their lands. Still, U.S. copyright owners lost an estimated $8 billion in 1993, which contributed to the "miraculous" growth of some Asian economies. With the support of the same economists who generally worship at the altar of "free trade," the victimized business leaders—Bill Gates, the billionaire head of Microsoft, among them—demanded that the U.S. government become more aggressive in protecting business interests. To round up international support for this purpose, the U.S. government took the lead in inserting sets of rules with teeth protecting intellectual property rights into both the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and the new agreement establishing the World Trade Organization.

Wildlife too has the benefit of government protection. Both bilaterally and multilaterally, the United States is taking steps to protect dolphins, sea turtles, whales, elephants, tigers, and other forms of endangered species. In April, President Bill Clinton banned $22 million of exports in wildlife products from Taiwan to the United States because of Taiwan's continued trade in tiger and rhino products, a violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Hmmm. Without abandoning Bill Gates or rhinos and tigers, couldn't it be time for the United States to take the lead in rescuing the world's children from global sweatshops? Supporters of the Harkin bill point out that the United States had erred in assuming that the individual states would cope with the growth of child labor in American industry. Congress, they recall, en-

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acted the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 in part to ensure that U.S. interstate commerce would become "undefiled by the products of children." Here's the case for extending the same standard to international as well as interstate commerce:

● The United States is the world's largest importer of child-labor products, so that we are individually, collectively, and massively involved. Moreover, if the United States takes firm action in behalf of these children, other developed countries will tend to follow, so that our leadership may be decisive. (The European Parliament has already urged the European Union to adopt policies similar to those proposed in the Harkin bill.)

● In the absence of strong U.S. leadership, the recruitment of children into the international labor market is bound to expand. On almost every continent, there are large pools of children who can be trained and disciplined to do many jobs now done by adults. Experience in Asian factories shows that physical punishment and the threat of such punishment do wonders to cure the playfulness and short attention spans of the young.

● Opposition to child labor is mounting in many developing countries where home-grown nongovernmental organizations are challenging the status quo. In India, for example, a Brahmin named Kailash Satyarthi heads the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, a network of sixty nongovernmental groups dedicated to freeing South Asian children from conditions he calls servitude. Such indigenous activism has created an indispensable third-world force for change. This happy development discredits the frequent charge that reform involves imposing "Western values" on native cultures. However, given the powerful influence of the global economy, leaders like Satyarthi realize that they need solidarity support from abroad, and warmly welcome it, even to the point of favoring selective international consumer boycotts and trade sanctions.

● Child labor undermines the U.S. commitment to help poor countries get off the treadmill of underdevelopment. Satyarthi turns around the popular notion that poverty is solely to blame for child labor, and argues that "poverty is there because of child servitude." He cites these figures: When India became independent, it had about 10 million child laborers, and about the same number of unemployed adults. Today India has "a whopping figure of 50 million children in servitude on the one hand and an equal number of unemployed adults, i.e., 55 million, on the other hand." Failure to eradicate child servitude today, he argues, will mean "perpetuating poverty, illiteracy, and abject misery of 55 million future adults in India and 80 million future adults in the [whole South Asian] region."

● U.S.-based multinationals, whose operations now span the globe, constitute a strong network for shaping labor policies abroad. Although they almost never hire children on their own payrolls, the multinationals handle much of their production through factories owned by foreign contractors and subcontractors, where the worst abuses occur. Sensitive to the need for monitoring indirect hiring to prevent abuses by their overseas business partners, a few U.S. companies—Levi Strauss & Co. and Reebok International being the most prominent—have adopted codes of conduct requiring that, among other things, contractors hire no one under fourteen. So far, however, such corporate initiatives are rare, and desperately in need of encouragement from the White House and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

In short, expanded global trade can greatly benefit humankind, but it will require concerted leadership to guarantee that children are not left behind. If "modernization" is not to mean continued exploitation of children, more than new federal legislation and codes of business conduct will be needed. Testifying at Department of Labor hearings in April, Kenneth P. Hutchison, executive director of the AFL-CIO's Asian-American Free Labor Institute, urged that the United States adopt firm and clear stands against the commercial commodification of children in its dealings with such powerful international agencies as the World Bank and others that are heavily dependent on American taxpayers, and in the newly created World Trade Organization. Along with the stick of regulation, he proposed a carrot: A much larger part of international financial aid for education in the developing world should be allocated to primary schools for the poor, and a smaller share to universities for the elite.

The opportunities for change are many. So are obstacles created by well-placed opponents in governmental agencies and business circles, U.S. and international, who use their influential roles in trade policymaking to resist any enforceable international rules except those that protect their own special interests.

Meantime, more and more girls and boys are being drafted to work for us in the global economy, without any of the protections accorded to dolphins and sea turtles or to the likes of Bill Gates. Apart from consumer goods, this unholy system produces stunted minds and bodies, children robbed of childhood, hope, and growth, as well as whole economies condemned to unbalanced and unjust development. Attention must be paid. □

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SUMMER '94: THE STATE OF POLITICS

SLOUCHING TOWARD NOVEMBER

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS

Politically, this is a summer of discontents. Most Americans seem irritated by politics—Congressman Bill Richardson (D-N. Mex.) called the public mood "antsy"—impatient with leaders but too listless to follow. The electorate is not angry, the usual frothing ideologues aside, so much as disappointed in government and at least half-disposed to give up on public life. The hesitant hopefulness that surfaced in 1992 has pretty much vanished, and Americans appear to be looking, often despairingly, to their private defenses.

It isn't just Bill Clinton, although unhappiness with the president is a big part of the story. In California, despite prolonged hard times and sharply contested races between interesting candidates in both parties, turnout in the June primary was the lowest in the state's history—38 percent of registered voters—and the electorate turned down every proposal to issue bonds for public improvement. And from Senator George Mitchell (D-Maine) down, elected officials in droves are returning to private life, finding the satisfactions of a career in democratic politics no longer worth the costs.

For the Democrats, this makes grim news, especially since in an off-year election, running against a president with less than rousing approval ratings, Republicans already could expect to make significant gains. An important part of the Democratic edge in congressional and local elections has derived from the party's greater ability to attract "quality" candidates, and when the allure of politics wanes, Democrats are bound to be losers. It is even more important that lower-income, nonwhite and hence likely Democratic voters are disproportionately staying home. The more that citizens need government, after all, the more apt they are to feel resentful when it falls short, so that it is not entirely paradoxical that in one 1993 survey, 53 percent of Republicans, but only 40 percent of Democrats, were willing to say that government generally is beneficial to the people.

As it stands, Democrats will be lucky to hold their losses to two or three seats in the Senate and twenty in the House, and as every major vote tells us, the president has none to spare. In the gubernatorial races, Mario Cuomo (D-N.Y.) is a good bet for reelection, but Ann Richards (D-Tex.) is at least worried; in California, Kathleen Brown, who once looked like an easy winner, may even trail the Republican incumbent, Pete Wilson, while Senator Diane Feinstein, a Democrat, also once far ahead, faces a real, and very expensive, campaign.

For Bill Clinton and his party, the immediate political problem is the need to reanimate their friends and well-wishers; the president's enemies may even be a help. Clinton probably could have ignored the radio right-wingers, knaves though they are. Those voters who supported—and most of those who might ever support—Clinton and the Democrats almost certainly are disinclined to accept the more lurid versions of Whitewater, *l'affaire* Jones, and the like, and they are showing some recognition that such matters, at most, are largely irrelevant to Clinton's presidency. In any case, those stories, for the moment, are not commanding TV headlines, and what is off-screen, for the American public, tends to go quickly out of mind.

By contrast, Clinton does need to worry about the wholly relevant and troubling questions about his *public* character. As a political leader, Bill Clinton sounds a very uncertain saxophone. With alarming consistency, the president stakes out

"Why does it always *seem like an election year?"*

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS *teaches political science at Rutgers University.*

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a strong position and then backs off, or backs down, when confronted by opposition or new information. This is most obvious in foreign policy, but it began with the question of gays in the military, the administration's entrée, and it has been just as visible in relation to Clinton's high-profile appointments or in policy issues like the BTU tax. In part, this reflects the president's virtues: He learns, is willing to cut his losses, and, in general, ends with a sensible result. But unmistakably, Bill Clinton suffers from his own problem with the "vision thing," a pragmatic focus on the best deal at the expense of moral leadership and civic education. Franklin Roosevelt, that foxy lion, sometimes followed a pattern like Clinton's—for example, in his retreat from the high ground of the Quarantine Speech—but as a rule, FDR kept his compromises off-stage, and he never forgot the political value of a strong line. President Clinton's too-public improvisations, even when agile, have created an impression of moral weakness, making the friendliest voters worry that however skilled at keeping the ship afloat, Clinton has no clear sense of direction.

To be fair, some of the Clinton administration's shortcomings are institutional rather than personal. Our image of the presidency was framed by Roosevelt and his immediate successors, but it does Clinton an injustice to compare him to those presidents past, and—Watergate and the like aside—even Nixon may be too high a mark. We live in the era of a postmodern presidency, in which chief executives are dealt a much weaker hand. Congress is more intractable, fragmented by various "reforms," its leadership weaker, its members less tied to presidential coattails and less susceptible to the appeals of party or patronage. In fact, what passes for good government nowadays makes it harder for a president to grease the legislative wheels with policy favors and campaign support, or even to protect an ally like Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.). To make matters worse, our growing dependence on the international economy means that the government cannot really claim mastery of its own house, and presidents cannot afford to be high-handed, especially now that world politics lacks the old disciplines of the cold war. No one needs to be told, moreover, that the media are more intrusive and adversarial, servants of a baffled and disorganized public whose distrust of authority and disinclination to sacrifice are a near balance to any desire for change. And, as Clinton himself helps to demonstrate, what helps elect a postmodern president—being a credible voice for outsiders—is at odds with the qualities a president needs to govern.

Even so, Clinton's record after eighteen months in office is vastly more impressive than Kennedy's. Very few of his achievements, however, sing in Democratic ears or inspire popular hosannas. Clinton's budget was our first serious encounter with the deficit, and it made a start at spreading the burden more fairly. But while most voters seem to have accepted the necessity for Clinton's measures—there is no real public outcry, even among Republicans, against Clinton's taxes—they

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do not regard them as a reason for joy. NAFTA, a major legislative victory for the administration, probably offended more Democrats than admired it, and the reform of health care is still only a complicated and confusing possibility (though a crucial one for Clinton, since the overwhelming majority of his supporters, back in 1993, expected him to make progress on that front).

But above all, a Democratic administration is supposed to mean jobs, and the economic recovery, which should be the administration's strong point, has been both carefully moderated—a sensible policy, but not a popular one—and uneven. "Winner-take-all economics," as Robert Frank and Phillip Cook call it, still looks like the rule. It was clear a year ago that only a fraction of laid-off workers were getting their old jobs back (14 percent, as against 44 percent in the last four recessions), and new layoffs and plant closings are stimulating a pervasive anxiety about work and the future, against which Robert Reich's emphasis on "counseling and retraining" sounds pretty feeble. Clinton doesn't deserve all, or even much, of the blame: Ronald Reagan's profligacy took away much of our autonomy in policy, and more of the president's freedom to maneuver. The United States has to satisfy its creditors; the international bond market calls most of the tunes; there never seems to be any money for public programs.

Yet Democratic constituencies, facing need and fear, are not inclined to be understanding. A considerable number of Clinton's critics on the liberal-Left worry that the president is too inclined to defer to orthodox economics, and too willing to make economic "growth," whatever the social cost, the standard of public policy. This November, Clinton and the Democrats had better have an answer to such charges, and not in words alone.

Still, the president and his party have some major assets. Bill Clinton has neutralized much of the old conservative advantage on social issues, one reason why the Right hates him so luxuriantly. Democrats have been taking a tough stance toward crime, even if a lot of it has been posturing, and the president has made welfare reform a respectable, even mandatory, part of any Democratic platform. Of course, abortion and gun control are intensely controversial, and the president's compromises on gay rights have irritated the Left without conciliating the Right; but on all these issues opinion probably leans to the Democratic side. And while it generates rumblings in the Black Caucus and on the street, the administration so far has kept race off the political center stage.

These aspects of Clinton's New Democracy have stopped or reversed Republican gains in the two-party balance: younger voters are tilting away from what had been Republican leanings and, recently, voters have been rating Democrats equal to Republicans in their ability to deal with crime and the deficit, and superior in relation to health care, welfare reform, and—despite everything—unemployment. They may resent Clinton's stumblings and vacillations in foreign policy, but they admire the fact that the country is at peace and regard Democrats as a better bet to preserve it. The shadow in this sunshine, for the Democrats, is that voters see Republicans, the recent recession to the contrary, as more likely to produce economic prosperity. And that may tip the scales decisively in 1994.

Anyone who occupies the White House, however, holds a good many trumps, and Clinton shows signs of trying to address doubts about his leadership. His choice of Leon Panetta as chief of staff is more than reassuring, and it has the side benefit of elevating Alice Rivlin, that nonpareil, to first place in the Office of Management and Budget. There may even be stirrings in foreign policy. At the Naples economic summit, for example, the president refused to panic over the decline in the value of the dollar, trusting in the "fundamentals" of the U.S. recovery, a defiance of currency traders that even the *New York Times*, not always admiring, called "gutsy."

But it would really be a political masterstroke if Clinton found a new Secretary of State. Warren Christopher has his moments—as he did last year, when he told the World Conference on Human Rights that we "cannot let cultural relativism become the last refuge of repression" at the expense of universal standards—but at bottom, he is only another lawyerly negotiator, not the strong political voice the president needs. Were he replaced by someone like Walter Mondale or Colin Powell, it would set bells ringing, here and abroad.

Above all, the president needs to do something that is visibly strong, that shows him to have courage and conviction as

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well as cunning, as his rebuke to Sister Souljah did in 1992. A showy success in foreign policy would help, but the president is too decent to go looking for a Grenada. He may get his chance on health care: his vow to veto any bill that lacks universal, irrevocable coverage was too unambiguous to be explained away, and if Congress flinches, it will be up to Clinton to stand the fire.

In any case, Democrats are always at their worst when talking to each other. Every element of the crazy-quilt Democratic coalition has reason to be annoyed with the Clinton administration, and none has shown much reluctance to say so. But the closer they get to Republicans, the more Democrats are inspired to a simulacrum of civility. So far in 1994, mainstream Republicans virtually have no policies, at least none that they feel comfortable advocating in public. Senator Bob Dole's (R-Kans.) cleaving to the line of pure opposition will not be sufficient in an election, since citizens expect to hear something like answers, and reliance on the market, the Republican lodestar, plays very uncertainly with working- and middle-class voters, who suspect that the costs of that policy fall hardest on them.

In fact, the absence of an articulated alternative from mainstream Republicans has strengthened the only-too-verbal legions of the Right, religious and otherwise, whose intraparty victories have been very much in the media, much to the Democrats' delight. Senator Charles Robb (D-Va.) would be a dead duck against anyone but Oliver North (although that race will turn on which of the two independent candidates, Douglas Wilder or Marshall Coleman, eventually proves to have more supporters who can't bear to waste their votes). With wonderful irony, Congressman Vic Fazio (D-Calif.) called the Religious Right a "godsend" to the Democrats, and perhaps it is, since nothing is more likely to move the party's faithful and drive moderates into its arms.

Democrats have reason to feel queasy, but—Republican follies aside—they know that whatever his weaknesses in governing, President Clinton is no slouch at campaigning. It is a long time until November, and the Cleveland Indians, barring a baseball strike, are real contenders in their division: strange and wonderful things may yet happen in 1994. □

SCREEN

THE BEASTS OF SUMMER

'LION KING' & 'WOLF'

There are those who worry that *The Lion King*—with its on-screen murder of royal Mufasa and the guilt-trip laid on his little son, Simba—is too intense for children. Have the worriers ever taken a look at the books their kids are reading? They might consider Roald Dahl's *The Witches* and a scene in its opening pages: the little hero lies trapped in the back seat of a crashed car and listens to an awful silence because both his parents lie dead in the front. Or they might check out *The Amazing Bone* by William Steig, in which the little heroine pig weeps for mercy while listening to her fox-abductor sharpen his knife in the next room. "I regret having to do this to you," sighs the fox as he drags her to the kitchen table to be slaughtered, "it's nothing personal." Or perhaps they ought to peruse the Grimm tale called "The Juniper Tree." At the end of this particular review, I'll give them something to worry about. But first, how good is the new Disney?

Middling, I'd say. The story is swiftly told and does have a certain mythic resonance. It's a rationalized *Hamlet*: Junior delays in avenging Pop because his murderous uncle, Scar, has made our leonine hero feel responsible for his father's death. But Disney's scriptwriters have crammed in jokes presumably deemed fit for kids only because they're too stale for adults: "What's a motto?" "I dunno, wassamatta you?" There's a surfeit of witless clowning in this movie and a shortage of genuine humor. As for the "serious" dialogue, it shows the pernicious influence of TV soaps: "Listen, you think you can just show up and tell me how to run my life?" is a line that puts us in "Baywatch" rather than in the African savannah.

The songs, by Tim Rice and Elton John, are miles below the level established by the last three Disney features. The melodies and lyrics contain little of the fun of *The Little Mermaid*, little of the romance of *Beauty and the Beast*, and absolutely none of the wit of *Aladdin*. When Timon the meercat sings the first few bars of that old doo-wop version of an African folk song, "in the jungle, the lion sleeps tonight," you can sense the audience perking up. At last, a *real* song instead of that dreadful "ear candy" that Rice and John serve up! But the background score, by the reliable Hans Zimmer, has more than a whiff of the mbube style made popular in this country by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and it lends an all-too-fleeting power to the opening and closing scenes. The best song composer for *Lion* would have been Paul Simon working once again with Ladysmith.

Some of Disney's best animation ever appears in this movie. The illusion of depth created goes way beyond that of all other cartoon features I've seen and conveys a sense of African spaciousness and majesty. At times, the drawing delivers a sort of art appreciation course for tots: the swirling lines at the bottom of a sun-baked canyon suggest Van Gogh; the design created by a herd of zebras evokes pop art. As usual with Disney, the comic and villainous characters are drafted with verve and wit, while the juvenile and romantic leads are cutesy-poo.

The best characterization in the movie is that of the villain, Scar, a decadent scoundrel, limp of paw and devilish in his designs. Voicing Scar, Jeremy Irons repeats his performance of Claus von Bülow from *Reversal of Fortune*. (The scriptwriters have even cribbed Irons's best line, "You have no idea.") High camp doesn't get any higher than this.

Now, let's give all those fretting parents out there something intense to worry about. What should really bother them has nothing to do with death scenes and guilt traumas. Mufasa's corpse

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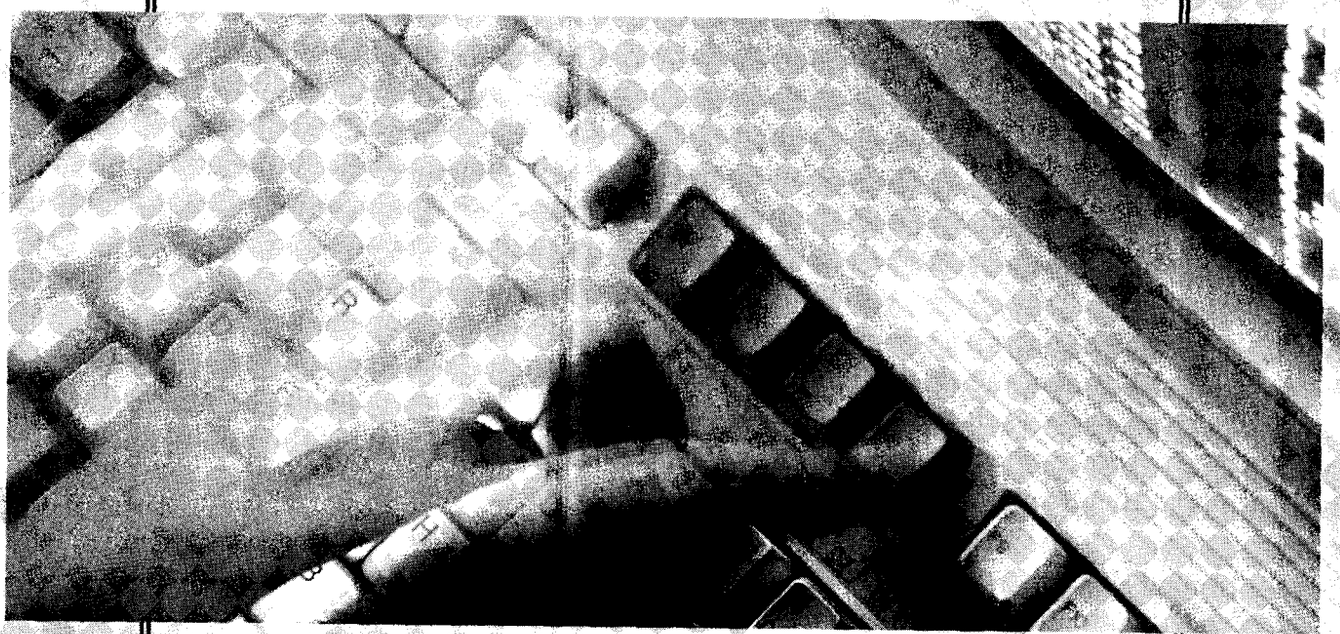

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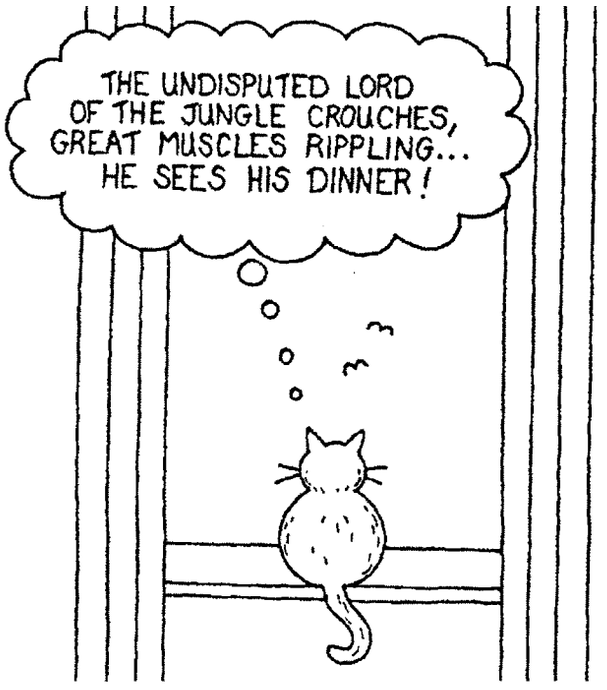

looks spotless after Scar gets him trampled by a herd of wildebeests. No blood, no mangling. As for Simba's psychological turmoil, no kid in the audience over five will doubt that the hero will be able to get his head straight in time for the final showdown with Scar. Simba is health personified compared with Spiderman or Tim Burton's version of Batman.

But consider this. At the heart of *The Lion King* is a social vision that is feudal. Here, the Good Life depends upon an absolutely fixed social order in which nobody can climb up or fall down without the world collapsing into anarchy. Terrence Rafferty, in his very funny dismissal of *The Lion King* in the *New Yorker*, completely missed the point when he jeered that Scar's seizure of the throne can make no difference to the animals that lions eat. Of course, Scar's elevation to King Predator is no revolution. Rather, it's Scar's promotion of his underlings, the hyenas, that throws the animal kingdom into confusion and famine because the food chain gets snarled up. These hyenas are villainous for being social upstarts, and Scar is doubly villainous for having betrayed not only his brother but an unalterable social order. Goodness, in this movie, is an attribute of birth, not experience. Evil, too, is inborn and utterly irredeemable. (It's no use telling kids that these are animals, not humans. They perceive cartoon animals as people.) Nature is all; nurture can only tinker. That is the fundamental vision of *The Lion King* and of all fairy tales. Keep in mind the hatred of the hard-working, upwardly mobile puritans for the fairy tales that aristocratic court ladies loved to listen to and peasant grandmothers loved to tell and scholar-poets loved to collect. Will our latter-day puritans let this latest licentiousness go unpunished while wasting time in complaining about the very mild violence in this movie?

Legions of the politically correct, to arms! Lynch Disney's CEO Michael Eisner!

Having got all that off my chest, I now await the video of *The Lion King*. My five-year-old will love the meercat.

Wolf is a monster movie for people who keep crystals in their homes to promote spiritual harmony. It's a horror film for men who are trying to discover the warrior within, for women who yearn to run with the werewolves.

On a country road, a wolf bites a gentle, high-minded book editor (Jack Nicholson), and upon him a wolfish spirit descends. His vision and hearing wondrously sharpen and his sex life improves. When his protégé, a yuppie weasel (James Spader) steals his job and seduces his wife, Nicholson bares his fangs figuratively and, finally, literally. He wheels and deals ruthlessly, snacks on muggers, negotiates to yes with a billionaire, goes to bed with the rich man's daughter, and grows hair just where it belongs—on his head. Unleash the animal within, the filmmakers seem to be saying, and all will be well. But, when Nicholson nips his betrayer, the latter turns into a rival werewolf and there is all manner of snarling and rending.

Satire? If only it were. Granted, there are a few mischievous bits throughout (as when Nicholson "marks his territory" by urinating on his enemy's shoes), but director Mike Nichols's languorous pacing and Guiseppe Rotunno's inappropriately serene photography dissipate the humor as well as any suspense or creepiness. In fact, much of Nichols's direction is employed in diffusing the potential drama of any given scene. Take the one in which Nicholson finally wins the heart of Michelle Pfeiffer, who plays the billionaire's daughter. The dialogue is witless enough: Pfeiffer is supposed to melt just because her suitor relates how he made spiritual contact with a wolf. Wouldn't that make this no-nonsense female look for the nearest exit instead of making room for this weirdo in her bed? But perhaps the scene would work if a clever choice of close and medium shots allowed the actors to show something erotic brewing beneath the words. But Nichols stages the whole scene as a single long shot with the two actors sitting by a river. Nicholson drones on while the river dominates the screen, our most entertaining ham actor upstaged by water. I suppose we should be grateful that the director kept the lid on Nicholson during the expositional scenes but the trouble is, the lid never comes off. Pfeiffer looks distracted and only James Spader entertains as the yuppie heel.

Did Mike Nichols call all the celebrated craftsmen and actors who worked on this film into a room just before shooting began to assure them that all their artistry wasn't going to waste on a mere horror flick? that they were actually going to use the horror genre as a pretext to explore the primal rage that lurks under the skin of every civilized human being? Did he then pop Robert Bly videos into the VCR and read excerpts from Jung? Did everyone in the room fall asleep? Was anyone awake during the shoot?

Wolf is an example of potentially enjoyable junk destroyed by the pseudo-seriousness of pretentious filmmaking. Not a howl, just an overly refined yawp. RICHARD ALLEVA

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Seeing through a glass, darkly

PAUL BAUMANN

David Plante, whose distinctive fiction and spare narrative style are often described as "hypnotic" and "mystical," has written thirteen novels. He is perhaps best known for his Francoeur family trilogy, about a large family of working-class French Canadians in Providence, Rhode Island. *Annunciation* (reviewed on page 23), his latest novel, recently received an admiring notice in the *New York Times Book Review*. "Mr. Plante manages to keep even a skeptical reader with him on [this] physical and spiritual quest," wrote Brigitte Weeks. "His hold on us comes from the economy of his prose, sometimes described as lyrical, which is in fact plain, taut, and uncompromising."

Plante, fifty-four, grew up in a Franco-American neighborhood in Providence, where he was taught in French at the local parochial school. After graduating from Boston College, he went to Europe, "with all the American myths of Europe intact. I went because of Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot." He continues to live in London, and speaks with the elongated vowels and idiomatic expressions of his adopted country. In addition to his prolific novel writing—"Too many. I shouldn't have been in such a panic," he winningly admits—Plante also writes profiles for the *New Yorker*. I interviewed him in New York in May.

PAUL BAUMANN: How important an influence on your work is Hemingway?

DAVID PLANTE: I once asked Raymond Carver what he thought of Hemingway, and he said "He's our grandfather."...The wonder of Hemingway is that he can describe something, a landscape, and he gives you a sense of something behind it. It's so evocative. I think of it in terms of space. He creates space, and so much is suggested in those spaces....

In a way, I think of Hemingway as being a very abstract writer. He's the most particular writer in the world, the most concrete. But as a matter of fact when you read a paragraph which is very concrete by Hemingway, what you're left with is a sense of something utterly and totally abstract which the concrete facts cannot account for.

BAUMANN: People have said as much about your writing.

PLANTE: That is partly due to the fact that English is really my second language, [my] having been brought up in this little parish in Providence, Rhode Island. You know, my grandmother could not speak English. She was illiterate. She was half Blackfoot Indian. She would draw pictographs for a shopping list...I come from total illiteracy...so in a way English begins with me, and I have to invent it. So if I write in this style, it has a lot to do with having to think it out.

BAUMANN: In *Annunciation* you use a very evocative image of a half-filled glass of water in a dark room. I was wondering if you could talk a little about that.... The darkness, which yet is a presence, is how one of the characters thinks of God. "That vast dark space behind the image of a sunlit glass of water is the way I can imagine God," he says. To be crude, is that how you imagine God?

PLANTE: I come to darkness because, I think, I'm not a believer. I don't believe, and yet I have all these longings. And these longings are impossible longings because I can't believe they are realizable. The very fact of the impossibility of them and yet the overwhelming presence of them makes me see God as darkness.

Darkness, as we know from Saint John of the Cross and other people, can be a very positive thing. But it's not something you believe in, it's not an intellectual belief that you have, it's not a commitment. It has absolutely nothing to do with dogma. It has nothing to do with the teachings of the church insofar as the teaching has to do with telling us how to lead our lives...but it's something fundamental and powerful and goes beyond one's conscious decision as to whether or not God exists....You write with what you have. If as a Catholic you are brought up, inculcated with longings for eternal happiness with God, and this

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is the greatest longing you have, and as you get older, you realize [it is the greatest longing you] will ever have, as a writer you think you must use these longings....My Catholicism is my strength. I'd be crazy to deny that. I'd be denying my imagination.

BAUMANN: You've said that Catholicism is a "deep and dark and strange religion" and the "space" in which you write your novels. Yet there are many American Catholics, I think, who would reject such a description of Catholicism. Is that "strange" space still available in the modern world?

PLANTE: Look, virgins do not become pregnant. The Catholic church offers us an image of something that is impossible. So what is impossible becomes possible in terms of this image. What was actually inconceivable, becomes conceivable in the Catholic church. So the Catholic church is offering all the time images of impossiblity, of what is not possible that then becomes possible. The Annunciation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Assumption, the Ascension, the transubstantiation. These are all miraculous things. These images, the conception of these images, are in themselves miraculous, because they do not exist. People do not rise from the dead. The bread is not literally the body and blood of Christ....They become what it is impossible to become, and that's wonderful. And for the Catholic church to lose all of that would be to lose the power of the greatness of its poetry.

In terms of images, I was in Jerusalem a while ago and went to a Greek Orthodox church. I was looking at the icons, and appreciating them aesthetically. In came three African women, all wrapped in white gauze, and they went up to the icons and ran their hands over the icons literally, and then ran their hands over their faces and bodies. They were taking the power from the icons. And I thought their appreciation of those images was much greater than mine. Mine was nothing compared to theirs. And I began to think about devotion in [terms of] images, and in fact this is one of the bases of my novel [*Annunciation*]. I wanted to take an art historian who is a nonbeliever, whose appreciation of art is basically historical—she sees things within the context of its age and aesthetic—and I wanted to take her and in the end have her kneel in front of a picture, a holy picture, and pray to it.

BAUMANN: In a review of a Marguerite Duras novel (*The North China Lover*) you wrote about the ability of the novel to convey a sense of "immensity" [of what lies beyond or behind ordinary life]. You wrote that for you the most satisfying reading experiences touch on that sense of immensity.

PLANTE: I believe that ultimately a writer doesn't write about himself. The idea that a writer is fundamentally egocentric is false. Writers ultimately write about something that is beyond themselves. And if they don't do that, then they're not interesting to me as a reader. I think there has to be something "other" in a book. And I think this other has to be morally and spiritually inspiring....

There is something about American literature that I worry about, and I work against. I talk a lot about this with Mary Gordon. There is in perhaps the greatest classical American literature a darkness which is final and utter and from which there is no redemption. It's in Hawthorne, it's in Melville, it's in William Faulkner, it's probably in Hemingway. And I think that's not enough. I want more.

BAUMANN: Do you find that to be Protestant somehow?

PLANTE: The darkness? Absolutely....And more than the darkness there is something else about American literature which I'm beginning to turn against. I find myself using words like decadent, which are highly charged words. And I don't know if I'd be able to defend my use of the word in the public arena, because it implies censorship, which I don't mean at all. But I think someone like William Burroughs is a decadent writer. I think it is imagination that has gone into itself—it's gone into the cellar....I'm not going to accept that. I don't believe it.

I think the way I'm most influenced by my Catholicism is that where Protestanism is subjective—God is internal, subjective, you go in—for Catholics, God is objective. He's out there. He doesn't need me to exist. He's out there, and you go out to God. And all my impulses are to go out....My instinct is to find some recourse outside myself....And writing can do that. If writing can be that kind of recourse, it's what I think makes writing and reading worthwhile.

BAUMANN: What do you mean [when you use the words] morality and spirituality? I ask this because you've written that if thinking means coming to conclusions about people, then you don't think writing has much to do with coming to conclusions. Yet Catholic thinking about morality has a lot to do with coming to conclusions. How do we bridge this gap?

PLANTE: I think morality depends on loving one another...and on compassion.... In its ceremonies, in its prayers, in its appeals for love and compassion and expressions of grief toward suffering, [the church] is absolutely wonderful. There's no denying that. You know, Catholics, especially writers, turn against the church for having destroyed their lives, they think. That often has to do with sex. They say, "Well, I want to make love." And they have every right to make love. But the Catholic church won't allow that. Well, you know, sex is a very minor issue, a very minor issue. There are issues much more important than whether or not you are going to make love, and if you're going to reject the church on the basis that it is not allowing you to make love, I think there's something wrong in the church and there's also something wrong in the rejector for seeing the church only in those terms.

There has to be more. My feeling is you get from the church what is most positive and what inspires you. There are images of the body from the church that are so positive and so sensual and can add so much actually to an appreciation of another person's body. Nothing—no poet ever has offered to the world—an image as powerful as the resurrected and glorified body. Which is physical! That's a physical body. We're not talking about spirit. As physical as one is at this moment. That's a very powerful image offered to one. And it's a very sensual image. It is, in its way, a very sexy image. So the church has its dogmas, but also in its blessed contradictions [or] paradoxes, offers these other things which it probably isn't even aware of. So I think one doesn't reject the church entirely, but one sees in it what is universal and what is positive. □

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Conspicuous artfulness: An author's shaping hand

ANNUNCIATION
David Plante
Ticknor & Fields, $21.95, 346 pp.

Elizabeth Beverly

To start with, there is much about David Plante's writing to admire: his terse yet evocative prose, the precision of his details, his willingness to use language to express states of mind that for most writers remain unexpressed for lack of skill. Plante needs his considerable gifts to fulfill a deeply serious intention, an apparently compelling desire to illuminate not the darkest regions of the human heart—a writer can do that in clear, sweeping prose—but rather, the dimmer regions, the areas that have clouded over, grown murky, lost their clarity. The regions we hardly notice, much less feel acutely, because we have lived with them for so long. Among Plante's subjects: the loss of religious faith in an already irreligious world, the primacy of physical beauty in human life, the struggle of the human will to do what is "right," that pesky urge to yield to violence or despair.

In his most recent novel, *Annunciation*, Plante reveals his stylistic mastery immediately. The title alone signals Plante's intention to set the reader's mind at work. Will *this* "annunciation" have any relation to "*the* Annunciation," known to at least some of his readers as the moment in which the Virgin Mary accepts her role in a divine mystery by responding, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"? The title resonates with meaning as the reader encounters the first chapter, all eight words of it. "A glass of water in a dark room—" Just a suspended image. Not even a sentence. Chapter 2 is where the sentences begin, where they appear to tell a relatively conventional story of two lovers spending a weekend in the British countryside.

But Plante's two opening narrative moves—evocative title and mysteriously visual first chapter—reveal his need for a somewhat conspicuous artfulness, his need to show the reader the novelist's shaping hand at work. Before the novel is handed over to its characters, Plante's omniscient presence is deftly and memorably announced. By the time the characters are set in motion the reader knows that one relatively common novelistic convention—that the novel offers up a slice of real life as lived by real people who have simply been caught in the act of living—has been slightly skewed.

It is difficult to maintain the illusion assumed by such a convention when a novelist wants the reader to notice him, or the structure of his book, first. It is similarly difficult to shake the notion that the characters are inventions, perhaps realistic ones or inspired ones, but nonetheless quite simply products of the controlling consciousness of the novelist. Finally, it is easy to

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suspect that the people in chapter 2 are there primarily because the novelist needs them to tell his story, reveal his beliefs, advance his plot, in the same way he may have needed to employ a haunting visual image in chapter 1. In short, it is tricky to write a novel that seeks to become both a work of art and a slice of life, a novel which seeks to draw attention to its own composition, while leaving room for fully imagined characters to go about the business of living as if their existence lies beyond the language which composes their lives.

Plante's characters are intriguing people. Claire, an American, is the forty-year-old widow of a suicide, the mother of despondent, sixteen-year-old Rachel, and the lover of sensible George. An art historian who lives in London, Claire is drawn to the work of a painter of the late Baroque period, Pietro Testa, one of whose canvases, *The Annunciation*, cannot be located. Claude is a young editor for an art publisher in New York. He floats on the surface of his life, occasionally plunging below to a world of detached yet obsessive sex. He tries to find within himself the will to reach out to a suicidal cousin. He fails; she dies. He too goes to London, where he meets Claire.

What Claire and Claude share with one another, and clearly with the novelist, is an astonishing visual acuity, an extreme sensitivity to their precise location in physical space. This sensitivity allows them to reckon their state of well-being. Usually they both find themselves adrift, detached, in disarray. They are watchers, readers of signs, yet ultimately stranded within their bodies, unable to make any gesture large enough to rearrange the scene around them. And they are both fascinated by the darkness that surrounds bright objects.

Ultimately, the darkness that lures them both is the darkness surrounding Rachel, Claire's daughter. She is growing great with child. The circumstances of her impregnation are horrifying, and this horror haunts Claire. It also haunts the novel in an almost surreal fashion, even as it provides the plot with its artistic resonance. Rachel's radiant but insistently tragic presence provides the focus for Plante's cleverness, as the story he is telling begins to resemble other stories, and his troupe of characters trudges through Moscow in search of Testa's lost canvas and its message of grace and acceptance.

The problem with Plante's cleverness is that it is premised on an oversight. In order for his plot to work as planned, Rachel's pregnancy must be perceived as unremittingly tragic. She must emanate despair. The people she meets must pity her. And, in any novel, certainly some of the characters might do so. But unwed pregnancy is not simply a convenient symbol of social castigation. For in real life, pregnancy has little to do with art and everything to do with living.

What Plante refuses to show his readers, perhaps because he cannot see it himself, is that pregnancy is never just a static reflection of the conditions of conception; pregnancy is always about one person living inside another. And some people, even some characters in his novel, will see Rachel and be, at moments, delighted, not in spite of her pregnancy, but because the thought of a new baby can be delightful. Such people, characters and readers alike, will forget to be horrified. They will forget that Rachel's pregnancy is simply illustrative. They will require a plot that probes more deeply the true relationship between Claire and Rachel. A plot that has the honesty to admit that if its central characters are a mother and daughter then the novel is at least in part about motherhood. A plot that decides to show why Claire is so despairing, so unable to comfort her daughter or to dream of the grandchild her daughter has chosen to bear.

Annunciation closes where it opens, as a work of art firmly rooted in metaphysical and artistic ground. The parenthesis of the first chapter finds its mate here. Claude is reflecting on his inability to believe in God, although he can imagine him. "I imagine him as the darkness in which images occur....That vast dark space behind the image of a sunlit glass of water is the only way I can imagine God."

This is a neat and visually pleasing ending. The sun has begun to illuminate the glass of water, and God can be imagined. But what about Claude and the rest of the characters? Isn't such neatness, even placed in Claude's mouth, simply a distraction from their own vibrant story? Belief or disbelief in God may make anyone's life more or less bearable. But no one can write a great novel without a profound belief in people, in the range of their longings and enthusiasms and cruelties. When a novelist refuses to recognize the full and wild life within his own characters, refuses to locate his own compassion, it follows that he cannot imagine us, his readers, in our own variety, and the reasons we might turn to him and his work to enlarge our visions, move our minds. □

THE MYSTERY REMAINS

ANCESTRAL TRUTHS

Sara Maitland

A John Macrae Book/Henry Holt and Company, $22.50, 295 pp.

Daria Donnelly

English novelist Sara Maitland must thrive on the heterogeneous allegiances that mark her life. She is a committed feminist and political progressive. She has reviewed a large number of novels and theological works and an even greater number of science and math books. Maitland was raised in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (her mother was national vice-president of its Women's Guild); in her twenties she joined the Church of England (her husband is an Anglican vicar). Last year she was received into the Roman Catholic church.

All these various allegiances bear on her work: in 1983, for example, moved by her feminism and her love of the church, Maitland wrote a nonfiction study of woman and Christianity titled, *A Map of the New Country*. It is a measured and pained look at the place of women in the

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churches with particularly interesting reflections on the differences between North American and British Christian feminists. Her most recent novel, *Ancestral Truths*, synthesizes all the interests and identities mentioned above: the narrator's disposition to mark time by feast days is complemented by her invocations of Fermat's last theorem and Cantor's proof that there are different sizes of infinity. Her characters discuss Thatcherism, feminism, math, and God. They also pray.

Maitland's joy in both synthesis and contradiction is most evident in the stylistic mix of *Ancestral Truths*. Imagine Edgar Allen Poe rising out of the grave to possess Henry James. In the Jamesian vein, Maitland presents a psychologically rich portrait of the Kerslake family (seven middle-aged siblings, their assorted spouses and children, presided over by two devoutly Anglican parents) on holiday in the Scottish Highlands. Maitland brilliantly conveys the dynamics of a large family; in particular, the combination of love, exasperation, and jealousy that these adult brothers and sisters feel for one another and their parents.

Maitland shapes her characters with great delicacy. In a short summary they seem like types: Hester, a powerful, pious matriarch; Tom, hail-fellow-well-met; Ben, a gay Anglican cleric just caught in a public sex scandal; Felicity, a furious mother of a deaf child; Anni, a purist vegan and dedicated intellectual. But Maitland makes them all convincing, keeping them from falling into set roles and preserving their distinctiveness, despite a family likeness in education, piety, and political commitment.

Although much of the novel comprises finely wrought portraits of family life and family members, its main energy is gothic. The novel is presided over by "The Hand" and tells the sensational story of cousin Clare who, as a young girl, was adopted into the Kerslake family after her parents blew themselves up in a pyrotechnic experiment. Enter Poe. Clare is recovering from a disastrous vacation in Zimbabwe, where, on Mount Nyangani, she may or may not have murdered her longtime lover David, whom she did not love. All she and we know is that the rescue party found her with an irreparably torn right hand, babbling that she had killed him. Other explanations for his death are possible: Clare and David broke every hiking rule, the mountain is haunted by ancient powerful spirits, and it is filled with RENAMO thugs attempting to destabilize Zimbabwe. But Clare cannot remember what happened. Her hand is amputated, her lover dead, her career as a professional photographer over, her memory damaged: "a pretty impressive list of losses even for her."

Back in England she gets a state-of-the-art artificial hand and a very worried family. "The Hand," as it is called, has a will of its own: striking her adopted mother when Clare thinks she wants to caress her, seizing and breaking objects when she wants to appear calm. The family gather round during their holiday and try to prompt her memory for a variety of reasons: to help her recover, to bring the episode to a resolution, to convince themselves they aren't related to a murderer, and to satisfy morbid curiosity. She has rather difficult needs, namely to discov-

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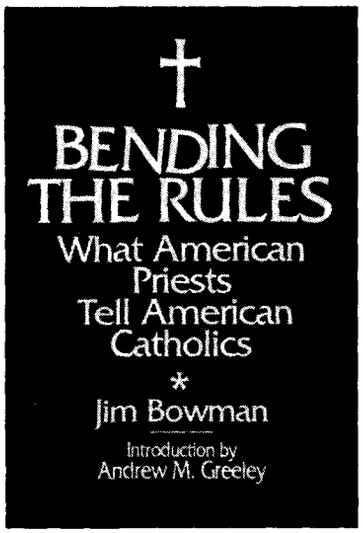

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er why she stayed with David for so many loveless years, and why she is afraid to act on genuine desire.

When "The Hand" made its appearance on page nine, I dreaded the moment when one of the characters would say, "If your right hand offends you, cut if off." I knew that my heart would sink when it happened, which it did, on page 248. Ceci, the sibling who has become a Roman Catholic nun, utters it in a passionate yet dramatically unconvincing speech that "God is the only danger big enough." By this time, Maitland is using the Kerslake propensity for didactic talk to explicate her intentions. In the book's shaky penultimate scenes, Maitland does not trust that the religious symbolism will resonate without her intervention. So we learn exactly what it means when Clare takes off and abandons "The Hand." We learn precisely that the events on Mount Nyangani are connected to the *mysterium tremendum.*

What we do not learn is whether Clare killed David or not. Maitland's refusal to end the story with a resolution of its apparently central mystery saves the book. Suddenly the real mystery of the book takes its rightful place: the terrifyingly insistent love and unconditional forgiveness offered by God, and embodied in the all-too-human family. *Ancestral Truths* is a wonderfully written and intelligent religious novel. After you read it, you may also hope that Henry James will rise up out of his grave and urge Maitland to follow his path of showing rather than telling. □

UP AGAINST THE WINDMILLS

A REBEL IN DEFENSE OF TRADITION
The Life and Politics of Dwight MacDonald
Michael Wreszin
Basic Books, $30, 590 pp.

Robert Worth

Dwight MacDonald embodied that lasting contradiction: a radical whose principles—both political and literary—were conservative and nostalgic. One of the great public intellectuals of his day, he helped to establish the *Partisan Review* and published the influential journal *Politics* out of his cramped Manhattan apartment. He was at the heart of almost every major intellectual dispute of his time; writers as different as T.S. Eliot and Norman Mailer acknowledged his influence. He appears in countless literary memoirs, always arguing fiercely, surrounded by a brilliant circle of critics, poets, and novelists. But he engaged himself so deeply with the issues of his day that he has barely outlived them. The vigor of his political journalism, tracing the American Left's long romance with Marxism, is compromised by its polemical atmosphere. In the 1950s he established his reputation as a serious critic of popular or "mass" culture. But mass culture was to take its revenge on him; within a decade or so he had been eclipsed by Tom Wolfe and a younger generation of New Journalists. By 1968, when he spoke at the Columbia University student riots (to the horror of Lionel Trilling and other faculty members) he was already something of a dinosaur.

Rather than seeking to redeem MacDonald, Michael Wreszin focuses on the extraordinary energy of his career, the miracle of his constant, restless transformations. In the 1920s, as a snotty aesthete fresh out of Yale, he wrote for *Fortune* and published a literary magazine (*Miscellany*) on the side. Within a few years he was putting so much Leninist theory into his analyses of the American steel industry that Henry Luce's editors rewrote them almost from scratch. In 1936, at the age of thirty, he left *Fortune* to read Marx and write for Trotskyist periodicals; in another year he joined Philip Rahv and William Phillips in founding the *Partisan*

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Review. He was far too contentious to toe any party line, and before long Trotsky himself was lambasting MacDonald for advocating a "skepticism towards all theories, governments, and social systems." This skepticism remained the guiding star of his politics. He could not abide dogma, and his political writing tended toward ethics rather than policy; at the war's end he repudiated the "scientific pretensions" of Marxism. By that time he and his wife Nancy had been publishing their own journal, *Politics*, for two years. The strain of that venture, combined with his failing marriage and increasingly troubled efforts to salvage some kind of radical politics, took its toll.

At the end of the decade MacDonald abandoned *Politics* and became a staff writer for the *New Yorker* where he began his assault on mass and mid-culture. Popular or mass culture, he claimed, unlike traditional folk culture, was imposed from above by a profit-hungry ruling class. The resulting "floods of trash" were bad enough, but the real threat was Midcult, an insidious blend of mass and high cultures that threatened to erode high cultural standards by aping them. He cited T. S. Eliot, whose *Notes toward a Definition of Culture* had arrived at similar conclusions from the opposite end of the political spectrum, and he railed against Midcult's signatures: "kitsch," the "built-in reaction," the groveling appeal to popular standards.

It was a catchy formula, and it made sense when applied to middlebrow magazines like *Time* and *Life*. When used against Hemingway, MacLeish, and other contemporary authors, it became little more than a critical axe—something else MacDonald acquired a reputation for during the '50s. There is some truth to Alfred Kazin's claim that MacDonald and his fellow ex-Marxists "adore the subject of 'mass culture,' because it gives them the chance to show that the people were wrong, not themselves." But MacDonald never gave in to bitterness or shut his eyes to political realities. In 1962 he chose to review a book by an obscure young socialist named Michael Harrington for the *New Yorker*. Thanks largely to that review, Harrington's *The Other America* changed the prevailing view of poverty in this country and helped inspire the Kennedy and Johnson initiatives against it.

Wreszin reconstructs MacDonald's life with an admirable thoroughness. He tends, however, to rely on cultural stereotypes (Dwight's "Waspish" behavior); and he does not do full justice to MacDonald's humor and verve as a writer. That is a pity, because there are few writers like MacDonald left. He could be sloppy, and he was often needlessly antagonistic. But he was never sentimental or obscure or

REVIEWERS

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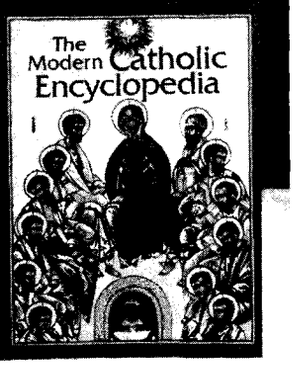
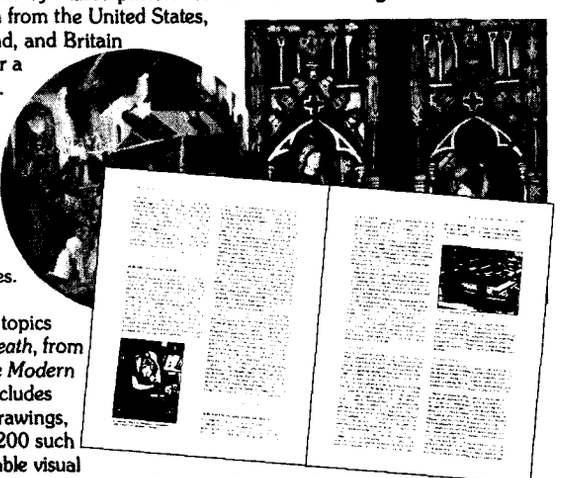


Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig, Editors

This authoritative encyclopedia combines a wealth of information with an attractive, easy-to-read format for a reference of value to professionals, parishes, and families alike. It is edited for readers in English-speaking countries, drawn together by a common language and by shared pastoral concerns and challenges. Consequently men and women from the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and Britain have written this work for a multinational readership. Its topics and themes have been chosen to meet the inquiries and religious curiosity of people today; therefore emphasis is given to contemporary concerns and contemporary figures.



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pious—never Midcult. At his best, his prose sings with a counterpoint of spontaneity and erudition that is rare. His essay on Joyce, for instance, mixes criticism with a hilarious account of his own youthful pilgrimage to the master in Paris. His reviews often parody the style of his subject, as in the essay on Hemingway: "He was a big man with a bushy beard and everybody knew him. The tourists knew him and the bartenders knew him and the critics knew him too...."

MacDonald's strengths as a writer—his humor, his versatility, his impatience with cant—became a kind of limitation in the end. His life, as Wreszin tells it, gives a sense of powerful, undisciplined intelligence, the mind of a man who loved argument too much to sit down by himself for very long. But he appears to have made an enormous difference in the lives of his peers; and his spirit, with all its wild, open-hearted gusto, animates their work as well as his own. He remained open to the end, joining the student radicals and the antiwar movement, helping younger writers whenever he could. His generosity, like his energy, was legendary. If his life has begun to seem foreign today, perhaps that is because the postwar intellectual culture in which he flourished, with all its fierce polemical passions, its sprawling energy, and range, is no longer with us. □

IRISH, CATHOLIC, FEMALE IN THE '20s

SEPARATISM AND SUBCULTURE
Boston Catholicism, 1900-20
Paula M. Kane
University of North Carolina Press, $49.95, 415 pp.

John Deedy

In the half-century between *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880*, Oscar Handlin's 1941 study in acculturation, and *Militant and Triumphant*, James O'Toole's 1992 measuring of William Cardinal O'Connell, no American cultural subgroup has been more thoroughly scrutinized than Boston's Irish Catholics. There's a library of literature on the subject. The phenomenon has partly to do, of course, with the colorful cast of characters raised up by the Irish influx, but the larger reason is that Boston is a casebook study in a remarkable phase of immigration history: the Athens of America bulwarked against the unlettered; the Unitarian Geneva wary of the un-Reformed Christian; the new arrival awed but confident. The full story will probably never be told.

Paula Kane weighs in after the Catholic beachhead has been secured. The Irish are here; their church is established; the Yankee lines have been breached. Kane's Boston Catholics are, in fact, in a transition between their insular origins and becoming major players in the community. It is a schizoid period, one in which Boston Catholics—the leaders and the led—are simultaneously cast "as victors (assimilated and empowered) and as martyrs (persecuted and marginalized)." Intramurally, the great challenge is how to keep a people on educational, social, political, and economic ascent harnessed in and for the good of the church, as interpreted by the clerical leadership.

This, of course, is familiar ground. Paula Kane's contribution is in bringing a feminist perspective to a subject that with a few notable exceptions (Donna Merwick's name leaps to mind) has been dominated by men. Kane's writing may be formal in the manner of a dissertation (which the book began as), but she's a brilliant marshaler of facts, with a keen eye for ambivalences spawned by the tensions between Catholic ideology and the thrusts of history. As an example, she notes the local church's opposition to women's suffrage on grounds it was a threat to femininity, then once the vote was gained, its portrayal as "a patriotic duty of women," to be exercised by them under "the counsels of clergy and their male kin."

These aren't great days for women in the church, yet they are a sight better than in the time of Kane's study, when motherhood and domesticity (feminine careers being barely tolerable) were components in the campaigns against birth control, divorce, "immodesty," socialism, suffrage, encroaching statism, materialism, mothers in the workplace, and almost anything else viewed as threatening to established gender roles and traditional institutional mindsets. Women were not just patronized, they were *used*, Kane demonstrates, to fortify a subculture and counteract separatist tendencies among the restless.

The ramifications of this were consequential, for not only were Catholic women kept in a form of isolation, but the intense parochial focus, the church's policy of a separatist integration, had the effect of shutting it off from the shaping and, for a time at least, a full sharing in the social programs of government. In Kane's apt hyphenations, the church sought to function as a "mini-city" and a "macro-family" and, as history was to prove, the effort was fated.

Kane's primary focus through all of this is on the lay experience, and this she traces through multiple aspects of the culture, including such off-beat components thereof as architecture and the dime novel. Predictably she finds the period belonging very much to the male species, though with subtle changes beginning to occur.

As wage-earners and incipient rivals to the Brahmin elite, Boston's Catholic men had always been expected to be part of the wider society. With the new century, however, came the dawning realization that women might be other than mere keepers of the hearth. That was progress, but as Kane makes clear, the enlightenment derived less from altruism than a sense that women would be useful in the fight against "paganism" and unwonted modernist tendencies generally. Hence, though still to be of the home, Catholic women were allowed to move beyond it, and so was born the organized Catholic women's movement.

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The church in Boston was especially energetic in activating its women, but was Boston being progressive or was it responding to an agenda originating elsewhere? Kane notes, for instance, that the formation of Boston's League of Catholic Women occurred concurrently with that of similar groups in Italy, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Canada, and South America. To Kane the circumstance smacks of "an orchestrated score," but she stops short of arguing that Boston was part of deliberate strategy, any more than it was earlier in keeping women cooped up in the home. Boston's bishops and priests, she feels, "were more often victims of their own idealized expectations of womanhood and dutifully parroted papal warnings that the numerous 'isms' generated by secularism posed threats to women's place and the family unit."

Subservience and submissiveness to priestly authority and discipline were necessary conditions for Boston's Catholic women's groups, but even under the arrangement Kane finds that they "managed to enlarge women's sphere" and at the same time perform significant social services to immigrants, working girls, prisoners, the sick, the poor and illiterate. Those contributions were to remain "largely anonymous in historical accounts," she adds, but nonetheless they dramatically heightened the visibility of Catholic women.

It goes without saying that church policy was often wrong-headed, although it did buttress a subculture as intended. For a separatism to endure, however, certain elements had to remain stable—specifically, says Kane, "clericalism, lay deference in matters of moral purity, and shared concepts of human moral development." As it turned out, each was to erode. First, there was the growth of an Americanized middle class with an educated constituency that would challenge the clergy's status as an intellectual elite. Also, with the melting pot at full boil, there was the deterioration of the central ethnic core, the Irish; the local church became more heterogeneous and it was a new game for everyone.

Beyond the walls, meanwhile, a more secular mass culture was taking shape, driven by that amazing novelty, the moving picture. Though church leaders sought to control the culture's directions by joining forces with reactionary Protestant watchdogs (a negative ecumenism aborning), the die was cast. The church was not to be the culture's custodian.

Indeed, as Kane's book progresses, it is apparent that the church has all it can do to be custodian of its own house, though it did manage. The subculture would survive for several decades more, though never as idealized as between 1900 and 1920. As for women, little would change. They would remain in subsidiary roles until the twin stirrings of "women's lib" and the riptides of the postconciliar period. But that is not this book's story.

Obviously there's an arsenal of information in Kane's book for the tendentious historian, but tendentiousness is not her mood. That's effective methodology for the scholar. It may let a triumphalist, myopic, and male chauvinist local church off lightly, but it allows much new light on a fascinating period of national and ecclesiastical history. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

essary for faithfully guarding and expounding revealed truth. Since Vatican II the magisterium has stated explicitly, in giving an authentic interpretation of *Lumen gentium* (25), that infallibility extends also to these secondary truths.

The dogmatic definition of 1870 specifies four elements which constitute an *ex cathedra* definition:

1. The pope must speak "by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority," in his capacity as "the pastor and teacher of all Christians."

2. The subject matter must be doctrine of faith or morals.

3. The doctrine put forth in the statement is "required to be held by the whole church."

4. The pope "defines" the doctrine in question; that is, the teaching must be pronounced directly and conclusively.

The pope states in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* that he is speaking in view of his Petrine ministry to confirm the brethren [Luke 22:32], thus fulfilling the first condition. The subject matter—which concerns "the matter of a sacrament"—is of faith or morals, thus fulfilling the second. The pope states that "this judgment is to be definitively held by all the church's faithful," thus fulfilling conditions three and four.

Thus the teaching that the church has no authority whatever to confer priestly ordination on women is manifestly demonstrated as a defined infallible teaching of the church to which all the faithful must give interior assent. Upon examination, these conditions were also fulfilled by the encyclical *Humanae vitae,* binding all the faithful to the teaching about the intrinsic evil of abortion, artificial contraception, and contraceptive sterilization.

Please correct your error of fact.

(REV.) JOHN W. BRODERICK

The winner: Pius IX

Providence, R.I.

To the Editors: Is Pio Nono alive and well, and living in John Paul II? To me, the apostolic letter "On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone" [June 17] says "Yes."

The centuries-old conflict between papalists and conciliarists ended in what seemed complete victory for the papalists in the reign of Pius IX [1846-78]. His Syllabus of Errors condemned the modern world root and branch. He was the pope of Vatican I, which routed the conciliarists and collegialists with the dogma of papal infallibility. He ruled the church unquestioned through a series of successors ending with Pius XII. Then came Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. *Aggiornamento* displaced the Syllabus of Errors; ecumenism replaced heresy-baiting; collegiality replaced papal absolutism; vernacular languages replaced Latin in the liturgy. We became a different church, and the vast majority of lower clergy and laity saw the council as the Holy Spirit rescuing the church in its hour of need.

The papalist counterattack began with *Humanae vitae*, which was more about the reassertion of papal authority than it was about contraception. Under John Paul II, the counterattack has gained strength each year. Now, with this apostolic letter, I wonder how much validity Vatican II still has. The way the letter was issued shows that collegiality is dead. The letter's substance shows that ecumenism is dead, and so are the opening to the laity and the spirit of *aggiornamento*. I see the letter as aggravating a spiritual schism in the heart of our church. We will probably never break out into open civil war but this spiritual family is split and confused. The leaders order a retreat but the ranks resist. Holy Spirit, where are you?

(REV.) EDWARD W.K. MULLEN

Let's go to the tape

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: There is no doubt that John Paul II wishes to acknowledge how women have borne witness to their faith. But, he maintains, "priestly ordination, which hands on the office entrusted by Christ to his Apostles of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the faithful, has in the Catholic church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone." In proof, the pope cites Scripture and tradition. The evidence, however—from the same sources as the pope cites—does not exactly seem to bear this out.

In the brief period preceding and following the death of Christ—the time in which, the pope maintains, the Apostles became "specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself"—it is women who display a fidelity, constancy, and devotion to the Son of God that constantly eludes the Apostles.

In the garden of Gethsemane, at Christ's arrest, and when he is brought before the Sanhedrin, each of the Twelve conspicuously fails Christ—sleeping while he is at prayer, fleeing when he is arrested, and outrightly denying him. At Calvary (apart from John, who appears to have recovered his courage), it is the women who are present and counted as witnesses and supporters: Christ's mother, Mary, and Mary, mother of James the younger, and Salome (Mark 14:40-41). Along with Joseph of Arimathaea, they witness his death and remove his body for burial. It is women who first learn of the Resurrection (Mark 28:1; Matt. 16:1-8; John 20:1-3). Remember, too, that the Apostles did not believe Mary of Magdala when she spoke of the Resurrection (Mark 16:9-11) nor did they recognize Christ when he appeared to them on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). Only when Christ appeared before the disciples in the locked room did they accept his Resurrection as fulfillment of prophecy.

True, as the pope writes, it was in this scene that Christ commanded the Apostles to "proclaim the good news to all creation." True, Mark makes no record of women's presence in the room. But before we accept their nonpresence as proof that Christ did not choose to have them present, we need to remember that the doors to the room were locked, and not by Christ's command but by the Apostles', for fear of the crowd (John 20:19-20).

This has not been the only time when men (not Christ) have blocked women from holding power in the church. We could begin with the reluctance of early male religious to let women form their own faith communities. But that's a whole other letter.

RUTH FORD

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Let's go digital

WILLIAM HOUGHTON

Our minds swell up with large abstractions like "global markets" and "global budgets," but our poor body and spirit still dangle from small gestures and trivial daily habits, rituals like *handshaking*. The lowly handshake, now that hugging or even touching the elbow is taboo, is left as our only relatively safe physical contact.

As a boy, I saw those tiny ads in the back of comic books, printed in such ant-like fine type that their very format suggested something occult, forbidden: "How to Shake Hands." (The ads for "How to Kiss" were even more tantalizing, but beyond my boldness to explore through the public mails.) A studious friend of mine received the handshaking pamphlet, which he kept in a box in his room, and I was somewhat disappointed to read its revelations: "Grasp the other person's hand firmly," it said, "and look him directly in the eye, pumping the hand several times and then releasing it."

I conscientiously followed these instructions for many years. As usual, the manuals for life were good up to a point, but not a complete guide. I did a fair imitation of a hearty handshake, but found that the styles of handshakes were too variable, my timing and the other person's too individual and erratic, and unexpectedly I was pitched into the world of the spontaneous and the genuine.

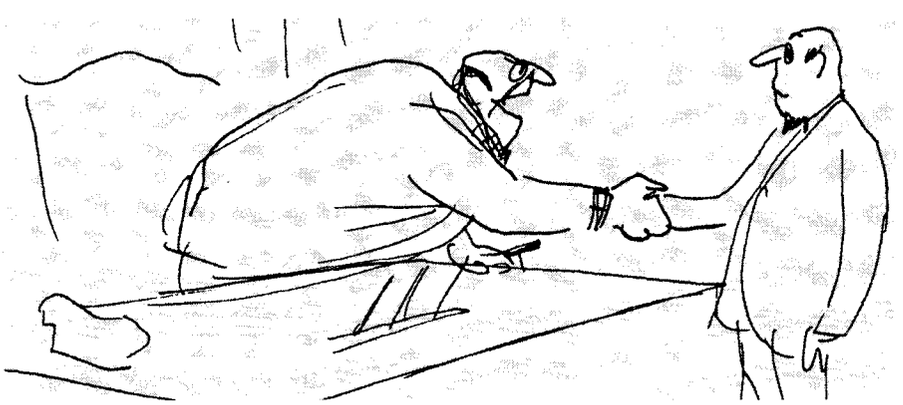
Many handshakers offer hands that are mushy, or slippery seaweeds, so guarded are they, and so wary of my approach. They would mold their hands (selves) to my wishes, which is not what I wish. The rock-cruncher is a familiar type. I enjoy crunching back, but if I haven't worked out on my rubber balls lately, I feel defeated, and resent his intrusion as much as I dislike the mushy retreat. Dripping digits hold a humid horror for the squeamish, but I must admit that I like a bit of moisture, even stickiness, up to a point, which gives a *grip* to the bones' brush. I have noticed that the fumbling of the fingers is almost nothing without a direct gaze or a glance from the eyes, and of course the appropriate words—"Glad to meet you," "Congratulations," "Thank you," "Good-by"—round out the ritual. Other parts of the body are obviously involved. One cannot avoid some awareness of their closeness and temperature. But the custom of the handshake requires the discipline not to look too directly at the other person's body.

The handshaking ritual gives us an opportunity to be both close and safe. I have noticed that some people plan a handshaking performance (still following the manual), but that most people—including me—simply bumble into a fairly haphazard lunge and "leak the truth at every pore." (The same is probably true of kisses.) Shaking hands is the last stronghold of the open and true expression.

For most people, the hand cannot lie. Artists have seen and memorized this quality. Michaelangelo drew and sculpted hands that speak volumes. Charlie Chaplin could make a character with a wrist and a finger. In the old days, a man's word and his hand—and a woman's, too—were proof enough of lasting commitment. The hand achieves this grace and expression with 250 muscles below the elbow (more numerous, and more complex in their movements, than those of the face). I have watched deaf people sign to each other with fluttering hands and envied their agile fluency. A room full of such quick-witted hands dancing to each other could picture the unseen worlds and solve all mundane problems, I feel sure.

Of course, even the "pressing of flesh" is looked at somewhat askance today, suspect of being a political ploy. College students are counseled to obtain informed consent before touching. Signed contracts before kissing may be not too far in the future, and soon after that attorneys will work on loopholes, disclosure, contingencies, and breaches of contract. A walker in any large city can see how heavily armored pedestrians are, the muscles of the back and shoulders rigid, staring straight ahead, speaking to no one, in terror of any physical contact. These are the fruits of our admiration of the dry intellect, and our fear of the damp body. Now that in our daily business we routinely telephone across the continent, and our minds are spaced out on TV, vaporized on faxes and the information superhighway, we may find ourselves in more need of immediate and accessible—even lively and "handy"—gestures to make a physical connection to others. I would recommend the lowly handshake. □

William Houghton, a physician, lives in Milwaukee.



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